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# BASIC CANTONESE

A GRAMMAR AND WORKBOOK



Virginia Yip  
and Stephen Matthews

BASIC CANTONESE

## BASIC CANTONESE: A GRAMMAR AND WORKBOOK

*Basic Cantonese* introduces the essentials of Cantonese grammar in a straightforward and systematic way. Each of the 28 units deals with a grammatical topic and provides associated exercises, designed to put grammar into a communicative context. Special attention is paid to topics which differ from English and European language structures.

Features include:

- clear, accessible format
- lively examples to illustrate each grammar point
- informative keys to all exercises
- glossary of grammatical terms

*Basic Cantonese* is ideal for students new to the language. Together with its sister volume, *Intermediate Cantonese*, it forms a structured course of the essentials of Cantonese grammar.

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By Stephen Matthews and Virginia Yip

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*For Timothy and Sophie,  
fountains of creativity and inspiration*



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# INTRODUCTION

This book is for learners of Cantonese who aim to take their knowledge of the language beyond the phrase-book level. While our *Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar* was designed as a reference book, *Basic Cantonese* is more pedagogical in orientation. It highlights the key building blocks of sentence structure, leaving details of grammar and usage for the more advanced learner. It also provides practice for the grammar points of each unit in the form of communicatively oriented exercises.

The book is self-contained in the sense that it can be used on its own for self-paced learning. With the grammar points presented in approximate order of difficulty, it should also be useful for practice, revision and reference. It can be used in conjunction with a language course or lessons from a tutor. Either way, it should be understood that to learn a tone language such as Cantonese effectively requires some aural support – ideally from native speakers, or as a second best option from audiovisual materials such as tapes or CD-ROMs.

## The Cantonese language

Cantonese is named after the city of Canton (known as Guangzhou in Mandarin), the capital of Guangdong province in southern China. Apart from the provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi, it is spoken in neighbouring Hong Kong and Macau, and also in Chinese communities overseas where it is often the predominant form of Chinese. Both in southern China and in Singapore and Malaysia, where it is widely spoken, it enjoys considerable prestige due to its association with the prosperous southern provinces as well as with the Cantonese culture of films and popular music ('Canto-pop'). It is also widely heard in cities such as Toronto and Vancouver in Canada, Sydney in Australia, New York and San Francisco in the USA. Cantonese will continue to be spoken widely around the Pacific Rim in the twenty-first century.

Cantonese is generally regarded, even by its own speakers, as a dialect of Chinese. This tends to imply, misleadingly, that it differs from standard Chinese (Mandarin or *Putonghua* 'common speech') largely in pronunciation, with some differences in vocabulary and relatively few in grammar. The grammatical differences are often underestimated, and it is dangerous to assume that the same Chinese grammar (essentially that of Mandarin) can be applied straightforwardly to Cantonese. In fact Cantonese has its own fully-fledged grammatical system, largely independent of Mandarin grammar. Indeed the Chinese 'dialects' vary in grammar,

as they do in other respects, as much as the various Romance languages such as French, Spanish and Italian. Moreover, the dialects of southern China, which include Cantonese and Taiwanese, are especially distinctive and diverse. Naturally, some knowledge of Mandarin can be helpful in learning Cantonese, but one cannot assume that it is simply a matter of learning a new pronunciation for the same language, or a new set of vocabulary to go with the same grammar. Hence to learn Cantonese effectively one needs to pay attention to its grammar.

## Cantonese grammar

Readers should be aware that the concept of 'grammar' used here is essentially that of contemporary linguistics, which is descriptive in approach, rather than that of traditional school grammar with its prescriptive concern for what is 'good' or 'correct'. The descriptive approach aims to capture the patterns of language as they are actually used by native speakers, without imposing value judgements on particular grammatical forms. Speakers of Cantonese are often puzzled by the idea of Cantonese, as a 'dialect', having its own grammar. Perhaps the simplest way to demonstrate that it does is to consider examples of 'Cantonese' as spoken by foreign learners, such as the following:

*Ngóh fāan ŭkkéi chih di	I'll go home later
*Kéuih móuh heui-jó	He didn't go

These two sentences are unacceptable to a native speaker (the asterisk \* marks them as ungrammatical), the first because in Cantonese adverbs of time such as **chih di** meaning 'later' come before the verb, not after as in English, and the second because the suffix **-jó** indicating completion is incompatible with most types of negative sentence. These explanations, simply put, are rules of grammar (the precise details are, of course, more complicated). By grammar, then, we mean the rules or principles governing the structure of sentences.

The kind of grammar to be learnt in mastering Cantonese, however, is not like that of Latin or Spanish where the forms of words – noun declensions, verb conjugations and the like – call for study. Instead, the more important questions are those of syntax: the order and patterns in which words are put together to form sentences. Sometimes Cantonese syntax resembles English:

leng sāam	pretty clothes
taai loi	too long
gwa héi	hang up
ngóh sik kéuih	I know him

In other cases, the order of words is markedly different. In some of these features, Cantonese differs from English as well as from Mandarin – the construction with **béi** ‘to give’ being a well-known example:

**Ngóh béi chái léih**  
(*lit.* I give money you)  
I give you money

Where the syntax is likely to cause difficulty in following the examples, as in this case, we give a literal word-by-word gloss reflecting the Cantonese word order as well as the natural, idiomatic English translation. As a general principle we have aimed to do this where the English translation diverges substantially from the Cantonese original, as in the case of questions and ‘topicalized’ sentences:

**Léih síh mǎtyéh a?**  
(*lit.* you eat what)  
What are you eating?

**Tíhmbán ngóh mǎh síh la**  
(*lit.* dessert I not eat)  
I don’t eat dessert

The glosses, within parentheses preceded by *lit.*, are generally omitted once a pattern has been established.

## Chinese writing and romanization

The relationship of spoken Cantonese to Chinese writing is complicated. The Chinese writing system is based on Mandarin, the spoken language of Beijing and northern China. Although Cantonese can be written as it is spoken – with some difficulty, since many Cantonese words lack established characters – written Cantonese of this kind is hardly used for serious purposes, being largely confined to popular magazines and newspaper columns. For serious writing, standard Chinese is used instead. This standard written Chinese can then be read aloud with Cantonese ‘readings’ (pronunciations) for each character, which are taught in schools in Hong Kong and Macau, enabling educated Cantonese speakers to be literate in standard Chinese while speaking only Cantonese.

For most western learners wishing to learn to read or write Chinese, however, it will be useful to do so in conjunction with spoken Mandarin, rather than Cantonese alone. For these reasons, we have not included characters, but use the Yale romanization system (with the minor modifications introduced in our *Cantonese: A Comprehensive Grammar*). This

system has proved effective for learners and is used in most language courses, textbooks, dictionaries and glossaries. The main disadvantage of the Yale system is that most native speakers are unfamiliar with it, and therefore find it quite difficult to read: it should be considered merely as an aid to learning the spoken language.

## Pronunciation

Beyond grammar, one of the main difficulties of Cantonese is posed by its pronunciation, and tones in particular. For this reason, the first three chapters are devoted to establishing and reinforcing the main features of Cantonese pronunciation. Learners who do not have access to native speakers or Cantonese media should be sure to acquire some tapes or other audiovisual materials in order to practise recognition and production of tones.

## Exercises

The exercises in this book are intended to be communicatively useful tasks, rather than the mechanical rote practice of some past grammars. The emphasis is placed on expressing ideas and, to give them a more authentic feel, some are situated in a real-life context: ordering dishes in a restaurant, asking for directions, and the like. Because many of the exercises are open-ended, they naturally allow more than one answer: the suggested answers given in the key by no means represent the only options. Learners with access to native speakers may benefit from reading out their own answers to them and eliciting alternatives. More demanding exercises, which may require additional knowledge or reference to other units, are marked with a dagger (†).

## Further practice

Few learners will be satisfied with armchair knowledge of the language: to put grammatical knowledge to practical use, exposure to Cantonese media and practice with native speakers will be needed. This book aims to provide a firm foundation on which to build proficiency. Using the minimum of terminology, it should provide just enough grammatical apparatus for the teacher and learner to devise further practice activities of their own. Readers graduating from this book will also be able to progress to *Intermediate Cantonese* which takes them into new and more challenging territory.

# UNIT ONE

## Consonants

In Cantonese it is useful to distinguish initial consonants, that is those which occur at the beginning of a syllable, from those found at the end of a syllable.

### Initial consonants

	<i>Unaspirated</i>	<i>Aspirated</i>	<i>Fricative</i>	<i>Nasal/ liquid</i>
Bilabial	b	p	f	m
Dental/alveolar	d	t	s	n/l
Velar/glottal	g	k	h	ng
Labio-velar	gw	kw		
Alveolar affricates	j	ch		

The consonant sounds in the third and fourth columns – the fricatives **f**, **s**, **h** and the nasals **m**, **n**, **ng** – are pronounced much as in English, while the first two columns pose greater difficulty. Whereas English stops such as **p** and **b** are distinguished by the fact that **p** is voiceless and **b** voiced, no Cantonese stops are distinctively voiced; instead they are distinguished by aspiration – a burst of air emitted in the process of articulation. In English, this feature is also present in that initial **p** is normally aspirated and **b** not; however, this contrast is not a distinctive one. To an English speaker, Cantonese **b** as in **béi** ‘give’ may sound either like **p** (because of the lack of voicing) or like **b** (because of the lack of aspiration). This combination of features – voiceless and unaspirated – is not found in English, making the Cantonese consonants **b/d/g** difficult to recognize and produce at first. Remember that **b-** as in **bāt** ‘pen’, **d-** as in **deui** ‘pair’ and **g-** as in **gwai** ‘expensive’ are not voiced. The problem also arises

in romanized place names: *Kowloon*, for example, is generally pronounced by English speakers with an aspirated [k], but in the Cantonese form **Gáulùhng** the initial consonant is not aspirated.

In the labio-velar consonants **gw** and **kw**, the initial velar consonant is articulated more or less simultaneously with the bilabial [w] as in **gwa** 'hang' and **kwáhn** 'skirt'. There is a tendency to simplify **gw** and **kw** to [g] and [k] respectively before **o** or **u**, e.g. **gwok** 'country' sounds identical to **gok** 'feel'. Similarly:

<b>Gwóngjāu</b>	→	<b>Góngjāu</b> Canton (Guangzhou)
<b>gwú</b>	→	<b>gú</b> guess
<b>gwun</b>	→	<b>gun</b> can (of beer, Coke, etc.)
<b>kwóhng</b>	→	<b>kòhng</b> crazy

The affricates **j** and **ch** are probably the most difficult of the initial consonants. They are distinguished by aspiration: **ch** is accompanied by a breath of air while **j** is not. There are two rather different pronunciations for each consonant, depending on the following vowel:

(i) Before the front vowels **i**, **yü** and **eu** or **eui** they are alveo-palatal, [tʃ] and [tʃʰ] respectively, formed with the tongue touching both the alveolar ridge and the palate:

<b>jī</b>	know	<b>chī</b>	to stick
<b>jyū</b>	pig	<b>chyūn</b>	village
<b>jēui</b>	chase	<b>chēui</b>	to blow

In these cases the sounds are fairly close to their English counterparts as in 'June' and 'choosc'.

(ii) In all other cases they are alveolar, [ts] and [tsʰ] respectively, formed at the front of the mouth (like **d** and **t**) at the alveolar ridge just behind the teeth:

<b>jā</b>	to drive	<b>chàh</b>	tca
<b>johng</b>	crash	<b>cho</b>	wrong

These sounds are different from any in English: **chàh** should not be pronounced like 'char'. In all cases remember that the Cantonese **j** is not voiced, just as **d** is not, while **ch** as in **chín** is aspirated, like **t**.

## Consonants and names

The romanized forms of names used in Hong Kong and south China follow various older transcription systems which can be confusing for the learner. To pronounce them correctly, bear in mind the following correspondences:

<i>Place name</i>	<i>Yale romanization</i>	<i>Surname</i>	<i>Yale romanization</i>
Kowloon	Gáulùhng	Kong	Gōng
Kwun Tong	Gwūn Tòhng	Kwok	Gwok
Tai Po	Daaíh Bou	Tàng	Dahng
Tsimtsatsui	Jĩmsǎjéui	Tse	Jeh
Shatin	Sǎtihn	Shek	Sehk

## Semivowels

The semivowels **w-** and **y-** also occur at the beginning of a syllable. They can be pronounced much as in English:

<b>w-</b>	<b>wah</b>	say	<b>wúih</b>	will
<b>y-</b>	<b>yiú</b>	want	<b>yuhng</b>	use

In the case of initial **y-** followed by the vowel **yu**, technically we would have **yyu**, but this is conventionally written more simply as **yu**, as in **yuht** 'month'.

## Nasals

The velar nasal written as **ng-** is a single consonant which presents two problems:

- It is basically the same sound that we find in 'sing' and 'singer', but in Cantonese it can begin a syllable, as in **ngóh** 'I'. It can be produced by pronouncing 'singer' as 'si-nger'.
- Cantonese speakers frequently do not pronounce it where expected. Thus the pronoun 'I' is often heard as **óh**, 'duck' is either **ngaap** or **aap**, while **ng̃h** 'five' may be pronounced as **rh̃h** instead.

A similar problem arises with the distinction between **n** and **l** which is made in dictionaries and some textbooks. Although certain words nominally



begin with **n**, notably the pronoun **néih** 'you', most speakers pronounce these with **l** instead:

<b>néuih-yán</b>	or	<b>léuih-yán</b> woman
<b>nám</b>	or	<b>lám</b> think
<b>nídouh</b>	or	<b>lídouh</b> here

## Syllabic nasals

The nasal consonants **m** and **ng** occur as syllables in their own right, albeit only in a few words. The most frequently encountered examples are:

<b>m̃h</b>	not (the main negative word; see Unit 14)
<b>ng̃h</b>	five (also pronounced <b>m̃h</b> ; see above)
<b>Ng̃h</b>	Ng (a common surname)

Note that these words each carry a tone of their own.

## Final consonants

Only two kinds of consonants occur at the end of a syllable:

- the stops **-p**, **-t**, **-k**: these stops are unreleased, i.e. the airstream is closed to make them, but not reopened again, so that no air is released. Such consonants occur in casual pronunciation in English (e.g. 'yep!') as well as in German and many other languages, and are not difficult to produce. What is more difficult is to hear the difference between them, as they tend to sound alike:

**baat** (eight) vs. **(yāt) baak** ((one) hundred)  
**sāp chē** (wet car) vs. **sāt chē** (missing car) vs. **sāk chē** (traffic jam)

- the nasals **-m**, **-n**, **-ng**: these are easily pronounced, although Mandarin speakers may have difficulty with **-m**.

**sāam** (three) vs. **sāan** (to close) vs. **sāang** (alive)  
**làahm** (south) vs. **làahn** (difficult) vs. **lāahng** (cold)

One complication here is that many speakers pronounce the **-ng** words with **-n** in certain syllables, so that **bohksāang** 'student', for example, is pronounced **bohksāan**.

## Exercise 1.1

Pronounce the following words paying special attention to the consonants. You may need to look at Unit 2 (vowels) and Unit 3 (tone) in order to pronounce the words correctly. If possible check your pronunciation with a native speaker.

- 1 **baat** eight
- 2 **taap** tower
- 3 **je** lend/borrow
- 4 **ngoh** hungry
- 5 **ngâam** exactly
- 6 **luhk** six
- 7 **seun** letter
- 8 **cheung** sing
- 9 **ngh** five
- 10 **yaht** day

## Exercise 1.2

The following words are ‘minimal pairs’ differing in only one feature. Identify this difference and make sure that your pronunciation distinguishes the two words.

- |                                  |                               |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 <b>bin</b> change              | <b>pin</b> a slice            |
| 2 <b>baai</b> worship            | <b>paai</b> distribute        |
| 3 <b>daai</b> bring              | <b>taai</b> too (excessively) |
| 4 <b>din</b> mad                 | <b>tin</b> sky                |
| 5 <b>jēui</b> chase              | <b>chēui</b> blow             |
| 6 <b>jēun</b> bottle             | <b>chēun</b> spring           |
| 7 <b>gok</b> feel                | <b>kok</b> accurate           |
| 8 <b>gau</b> enough              | <b>kau</b> deduct             |
| 9 <b>gwan</b> stick              | <b>kwan</b> difficult         |
| 10 <b>jēung</b> sheet (of paper) | <b>chēung</b> window          |

## † Exercise 1.3

The following surnames (1–6) and place names (7–12) are written in obsolete romanization systems. Pronounce them and write them in Yale romanization.

- |                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| 1 <b>Cheung</b> | 7 <b>Tai O</b>       |
| 2 <b>Chiu</b>   | 8 <b>Lai Chi Kok</b> |

3 **Kwan**  
4 **Ting**  
5 **Shum**  
6 **Chung**

9 **Tseung Kwan O**  
10 **Shaueiwan**  
11 **Tai Kok Tsui**  
12 **Sham Shui Po**

# UNIT TWO

## Vowels and diphthongs

The vowels written **a**, **aa**, **e**, **i**, **o**, **u**, **eu** and **yu** are all single vowels which should be pronounced with consistent quality throughout: for example, Cantonese **so** should not sound like 'so' in English, but more like 'saw'. The first six are comparable to English vowels, while the last two are not, being closer to French:

<b>a</b>	<b>bāt</b> pen	similar to the vowel in 'but'
<b>aa</b>	<b>sāam</b> three	similar to the vowel in 'father'
<b>i</b>	<b>sī</b> silk	similar to the vowel in 'see'
<b>e</b>	<b>leng</b> pretty	similar to the vowel in 'pet'
<b>o</b>	<b>dō</b> many	similar to the vowel in 'paw'
<b>u</b>	<b>fu</b> trousers	similar to the vowel in 'fool'
<b>yu</b>	<b>syū</b> book	similar to the vowel in French 'tu'
<b>eu</b>	<b>seun</b> letter	similar to the first vowel in French 'Peugeot'

### Long and short a

A peculiarity of Cantonese not shared with most other varieties of Chinese is the distinction between short **a** and long **aa**. The following minimal pairs differ in the length of the vowel:

<b>sām</b>	heart	<b>sāam</b>	three
<b>mahn</b>	ask	<b>maahn</b>	slow
<b>hāhng</b>	permanent	<b>hāahng</b>	walk
<b>kāt</b>	cough	<b>kāat</b>	card

These vowels differ in sound quality as well as length: **sām** sounds much like English 'sun', while **sāam** has an open vowel more like that of 'sample' in (southern British) English. When **a** comes at the end of a syllable as in **fa** 'flower' it is written with a single **a** but pronounced as in 'fa-ther'.

## Front rounded vowels

The digraphs **yu** and **eu** represent single vowels produced at the front of the mouth with rounded lips; counterparts to these are not generally used in English, but exist in several European languages:

**yu** is similar to French 'u' and German 'ü'. In English something like it appears in the second syllable of 'issue'.

**eu** is similar to French 'eu' as in the second syllable in 'hors d'oeuvre'. English speakers may try pronouncing 'her' with rounded lips (as if pouting).

## Variable vowels

The sound of a vowel can be affected by a following consonant. In particular, high vowels become more open before the velar consonants **-k** and **-ng**:

- 1 The vowel in **sihk** 'eat' lies between **i** and **e**, but is still distinct from **sehk** 'stone'. Similarly, **gīng** 'pass by' can be difficult to distinguish from **gēng** 'be afraid'. In a few words usage varies between **i** and **e**, for example, **sihng** or **sēhng** 'whole'.
- 2 The vowel in **luhk** 'green' lies between **u** and **o**, but is still distinct from **lohk** 'go down'. Similarly, **tùhng** 'with' can be difficult to distinguish from **tòhng** 'sugar'.
- 3 The rounded vowel **eu** before the velar consonants **k** and **ng** as in **jeuk** 'wear' and **cheung** 'sing' is more open than that in **chēut** 'go out', **jēun** 'bottle', **seun** 'letter', and so on.

## Diphthongs

These combinations of two vowel sounds are produced by shifting from one vowel to another over the course of one syllable:

<b>iu</b>	<b>giu</b>	call(ed)	as in English 'few'
<b>oi</b>	<b>choi</b>	vegetable	as in English 'boy'
<b>ou</b>	<b>dou</b>	arrive	as in English 'hold'
<b>ei</b>	<b>sei</b>	four	as in English 'say'
<b>ui</b>	<b>guih</b>	tired	as in English 'goo-ey' (but pronounced as only one syllable)
<b>eui</b>	<b>seui</b>	tax	(the front rounded vowel <b>eu</b> followed by the glide <b>i</b> )

Note that there are diphthongs corresponding to both short **a** and long **aa**:

<b>ai</b>	<b>sāi</b>	west	<b>aa</b>	<b>sāai</b>	to waste
	<b>máih</b>	rice		<b>máaih</b>	to buy
<b>au</b>	<b>gau</b>	enough	<b>aa</b>	<b>gaau</b>	to teach
	<b>lauh</b>	leak		<b>laauh</b>	to scold

The long diphthongs are close to those in English: **aa** is similar to that in 'sky', **aa** to that in 'how'.

## Exercise 2.1

Pronounce the following minimal pairs (refer to Unit 3 for the tones, which are the same for each pair):

1	<b>gān</b>	follow	<b>gāan</b>	(classifier for house)
2	<b>fān</b>	separate	<b>fāan</b>	back, return
3	<b>sān</b>	new	<b>sāan</b>	mountain
4	<b>gām</b>	gold	<b>gāam</b>	prison
5	<b>lām</b>	think	<b>lāam</b>	hug, embrace
6	<b>gām</b>	dare	<b>gāam</b>	deduct, reduce (prices)
7	<b>lāhm</b>	to water	<b>lāahm</b>	blue
8	<b>gāi</b>	chicken	<b>gāai</b>	street
9	<b>lāih</b>	polite	<b>lāaih</b>	milk
10	<b>chāu</b>	autumn	<b>chāau</b>	copy
11	<b>līng</b>	shiny	<b>lēng</b>	pretty
12	<b>pīhng</b>	flat	<b>pēhng</b>	cheap
13	<b>līk</b>	take, pick	<b>lēk</b>	clever, smart
14	<b>sīhk</b>	eat	<b>sehk</b>	stone
15	<b>gīng</b>	pass	<b>gēng</b>	fear
16	<b>mōhk</b>	curtain, screen	<b>muhk</b>	wood
17	<b>sōng</b>	lose, die	<b>sung</b>	send
18	<b>lohk</b>	happy	<b>luhk</b>	green
19	<b>dōhk</b>	measure	<b>duhk</b>	read
20	<b>mōhng</b>	to stare	<b>muhng</b>	dream

## Exercise 2.2

Pronounce the following words, paying special attention to the rounded vowels **yu** and **eu** (if possible check your pronunciation with a native speaker or against a recording):

1	<b>syut</b>	snow	11	<b>yuhbeih</b>	prepare
2	<b>hyut</b>	blood	12	<b>kyutdihng</b>	decide
3	<b>hěung</b>	fragrant	13	<b>yuhthéng</b>	mooncake
4	<b>kěuhng</b>	strong	14	<b>leuhnjeuhn</b>	clumsy
5	<b>yuhnnyi</b>	willing	15	<b>măauhtéuhn</b>	contradiction
6	<b>chyun</b>	to spell/an inch			
7	<b>lyuhn</b>	chaotic, messy			
8	<b>jěun</b>	bottle			
9	<b>jyuh</b>	to live			
10	<b>dyún</b>	short			

### Exercise 2.3

Pronounce the following pairs of words paying special attention to the diphthongs:

#### A monosyllabic

1	<b>meih</b>	not yet
2	<b>gei</b>	mail
3	<b>yiu</b>	want
4	<b>siu</b>	smile
5	<b>tiu</b>	jump
6	<b>múih</b>	every, each
7	<b>múuh</b>	seconds
8	<b>guih</b>	tired
9	<b>giu</b>	call
10	<b>wúih</b>	will
11	<b>dóih</b>	bag
12	<b>gói</b>	change
13	<b>gōu</b>	tall
14	<b>lóuh</b>	old
15	<b>tēui</b>	push

#### B disyllabic

<b>meihdouh</b>	taste
<b>jihgéi</b>	oneself
<b>jiugu</b>	take care
<b>diu-yú</b>	fishing
<b>tiu-móuh</b>	to dance
<b>múihmúi</b>	sister
<b>kèihmíuh</b>	wonderful
<b>hauhfui</b>	regret
<b>giu-ngouh</b>	proud
<b>hói-wúi</b>	have a meeting
<b>joigin</b>	see you ( <i>lit.</i> see again)
<b>yínggói</b>	should
<b>gwónggou</b>	advertisement
<b>dihnlóuh</b>	computer
<b>teui-yáu</b>	retire

# UNIT THREE

## Tone

Like other varieties of Chinese and many south-east Asian languages, Cantonese is a tonal language: the relative pitch at which a syllable is pronounced plays a role in distinguishing one word from another. While tone presents one of the biggest obstacles, both real and psychological, to a working command of Cantonese, it also gives a musical quality to the language, and some learners find musical analogies helpful.

### The importance of tones

Whereas in other languages deviation in pitch might merely result in a foreign accent, in Cantonese it changes the identity of a word:

High level	Low level	Mid level	Low level
sān new	sahn kidney	gau enough	gauh old, dated
syū book	syuh tree	dim to touch	dihm OK, done
High level	High rising	High rising	Low rising
lāu jacket	láu apartment	ngó goose	ngóh I
yāt bun one half	yāt bún one (book)	chí teeth	chüh resemble

Fortunately a word pronounced with an inaccurate tone can often be recognized from the context, although the errors are sometimes amusing.

### How many tones?

To begin with a perennial question: how many tones are there? Linguists of different persuasions debate the issue, and different dialects of Cantonese vary in this respect. Although some reference books distinguish seven, nine or even ten tones, most current analyses assume six in



Hong Kong Cantonese – and for the beginner six tones are plenty. These are shown, with the vowel **a** as an example, in the following table.

	Rising	Level	Falling
High	á	ā	(à)
Mid		a	
Low	áh	ah	àh

The ‘high level’ tone is sometimes pronounced with a noticeable fall (à) as in **sìn** ‘first’. Some books and dictionaries attempt to distinguish high level as in **sāan** ‘hill’ from high falling as in **sàan** ‘to close’, but most speakers make no such systematic distinction and these two words sound identical. Some other textbooks show this tone as ‘falling’ (à) for typographical convenience; we write them with the ‘high level’ diacritic (ā) throughout as this pronunciation seems to be dominant among younger speakers in Hong Kong.

For many beginners, two strategies may be useful in tackling the six tones:

- The three level tones (high, mid and low) are relatively easy to recognize and produce, providing three anchor points. In musical terms, the difference between the high and mid-level tones is about one and a half tones (a minor third), while that between the mid-level and low-level tones is one whole tone.
- It is relatively easy to recognize a tone as being one of the higher or one of the lower three. The ‘h’ marking the three low tones in the Yale romanization system comes in useful here, effectively marking the lower register. To distinguish between the various lower tones, especially between the low level and low falling, is more demanding. The low falling tone as in **laih** ‘come’ can often be recognized by a ‘creaky’ voice quality as the pitch reaches the bottom of the speaker’s voice range.

The pronunciations are best learnt from native speakers or recordings, but English intonation patterns approximate some of the tones:

- The high rising tone as in **dím** ‘how?’ resembles a question showing surprise (‘who? really?’);
- The low rising tone as in **ngóh** ‘I’ begins with a slight dip and can be compared to a hesitant ‘well, ...’;
- The low falling tone as in **yahn** ‘person’ resembles a dismissive intonation, as in a calm but definitive ‘no’.

It may be some consolation to note that speakers of other Chinese dialects, and even some native speakers, have difficulty distinguishing the two rising tones, sometimes confusing phrases such as:

<b>sung séung heui</b>	send some pictures ( <b>séung</b> )
<b>sung séuhng heui</b>	send something up ( <b>séuhng</b> )
<b>Méihgwok sí</b>	American history
<b>Méihgwok síh</b>	the American market

## Tone versus stress and intonation

In English a word such as 'yes' can be pronounced with a variety of intonation patterns:

- falling: yes! (We've done it!)
- dipping: yes, (but ...)
- low level: yes ... (What is it this time?)

In Cantonese the word **haih** 'yes' must be pronounced with a low-level tone regardless of the context, otherwise it will sound like another word. Word stress and intonation patterns as used in English and other European languages often interfere with production of tones. When we stress a word, we automatically give it a high pitch; if this is superimposed on a Cantonese tone, it may turn a low tone into a high level or high falling one, for example:

**haih** (yes) + emphatic stress → **hái** or **hài** (this is a common error, often committed by the second author, and comes dangerously close to obscenity)

Similarly, questions in English and many other languages end with a rising intonation. If this is added to a Cantonese question it may change the identity of the last word or two. Consequently, the scope for stress and intonation is limited (largely to sentence particles).

## Tone change

A 'changed tone' occurs in colloquial speech in certain combinations. The affected syllable is pronounced with a high rising tone instead of the usual low (level or falling) tone. There are several categories including the following:

(i) Nouns at the end of a compound or phrase:

<b>yàhn</b> person	but	<b>léuih-yán</b> woman
<b>yuht</b> month	but	<b>chóh-yút</b> spend a month recovering after giving birth
<b>màhn-hohk</b> literature	but	<b>Ying-mán</b> English (language)
<b>yùh-dáan</b> fish-cake	but	<b>finh yú</b> a/the fish
<b>lauh-tái</b> staircase	but	<b>déng-láu</b> top floor, penthouse
<b>yāt hahp syū</b> a box of books	but	<b>yāt go hāp</b> a box
<b>yāt dihp</b> choi a dish of vegetables	but	<b>yāt jek dip</b> a dish

(ii) Names with the prefix **a-** or **lóuh-**:

<b>Chàhn Sāang</b> Mr. Chan	but	<b>A-Chán</b> Chan (colloquial)
<b>Làih Sāang</b> Mr Lai		<b>Lóuh-Lái</b> old (Mr) Lai

(iii) Reduplicated adjectives, in which the second syllable changes to a high rising tone (see also Unit 9):

<b>sòh</b> foolish	but	<b>sòh-só-déi</b> silly
<b>fèih</b> fat	but	<b>fèih-féi-déi</b> chubby

The rules underlying this alternation are rather too complex to spell out here. Learners will develop a feel for this phenomenon on exposure to colloquial Cantonese.

### Exercise 3.1

Practise distinguishing the six tones on the following syllables (meanings given in parentheses indicate that the syllable forms part of a word with that meaning):

1 <b>sī</b> poem	<b>sí</b> history	<b>si</b> try	<b>sìh</b> time	<b>síh</b> market	<b>sìh</b> matter
2 <b>fān</b> split	<b>fán</b> powder	<b>fan</b> lie	<b>fāhn</b> grave	<b>fáhn</b> (excited)	<b>fahn</b> portion
3 <b>sēui</b> need	<b>séui</b> water	<b>seui</b> tax	<b>sèuih</b> suspend	<b>séuih</b> (clue)	<b>seuih</b> (tunnel)
4 <b>yāu</b> rest	<b>yáu</b> petrol	<b>yau</b> slender	<b>yāuh</b> swim	<b>yáuh</b> have	<b>yauh</b> again
5 <b>fū</b> (husband)	<b>fú</b> bitter	<b>fu</b> trousers	<b>fùh</b> support	<b>fáh</b> woman	<b>fuh</b> father

### Exercise 3.2

Read out the following sentences which illustrate the same sequence of six tones as in exercise 3.1:

- 1 *Dī gú-piú kòhng séuhng lohk* (The shares are going up and down (in value) like crazy)
- 2 *Ūkkéi gam kùhng móuh yuhng* (The household is so poor, it's no use)
- 3 *Gām lín gwai mēh máaih jyuh* (This year it's expensive, (we) won't buy it yet)
- 4 *Sān lāu taai làahn máaih maaìh* (New flats are too difficult to buy and sell)
- 5 *Bín gwái go tùhng kéuih jyuh?* (Who on earth is living with him?)
- 6 *Jīng hóu suai sèhng máahn sihk* (After steaming everything, spend the whole evening eating it)

### Exercise 3.3

Pronounce the following pairs differing in tone (and occasionally other features such as vowel length):

- |                       |                       |                     |                                |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 <i>fóchē</i>        | train                 | <i>foché</i>        | lorry                          |
| 2 <i>chīsín</i>       | crazy                 | <i>chihsihn</i>     | charity                        |
| 3 <i>lóuh yàhn</i>    | old person            | <i>louh yàhn</i>    | pedestrian                     |
| 4 <i>gāisih</i>       | market                | <i>gai sih</i>      | count the time                 |
| 5 <i>sái sán</i>      | to wash one's<br>body | <i>sái sahn</i>     | clean the kidney<br>(dialysis) |
| 6 <i>lāangsāam</i>    | sweater               | <i>laahn sāam</i>   | worn-out clothes               |
| 7 <i>gúsìh</i>        | stock market          | <i>gusi</i>         | story                          |
| 8 <i>maaìh lāu</i>    | sell a flat           | <i>máaih lāu</i>    | buy a jacket                   |
| 9 <i>gáu dím</i>      | 9 o'clock             | <i>gáu dihm</i>     | manage to do<br>something      |
| 10 <i>séung mòhng</i> | casualty              | <i>séuhng móhng</i> | get on the Internet            |

### † Exercise 3.4

Change the tone of the italicized syllable or word to the high-rising changed tone as used in colloquial speech, for example, *sān* new + *máhn* information → *sānmán* news:

- 1 *hauh* behind + *mùhn* door → \_\_\_\_\_ back door
- 2 *yàuh* oil + *tiuh* strip → \_\_\_\_\_ Chinese fried doughnut
- 3 *bun* half + *yeh* late → \_\_\_\_\_ midnight

- |    |   |                     |
|----|---|---------------------|
| 4  | <b>sīu</b> burn + <b>yeh</b> late → _____                   | late-night meal     |
| 5  | <b>Dāk</b> German + <b>māhn</b> language → _____            | German              |
| 6  | <b>ūn</b> sky + <b>pāahng</b> scaffolding → _____           | roof top            |
| 7  | <b>sāam jek</b> three-classifier + <b>dihp</b> dish → _____ | three dishes        |
| 8  | <b>Ou</b> bay + <b>mūhn</b> door → _____                    | Macau (place name)  |
| 9  | <b>yahp</b> put in + <b>yàuh</b> oil → _____                | fill up with petrol |
| 10 | <b>fā</b> flower + <b>yùhn</b> garden → _____               | garden              |

# UNIT FOUR

## Pronouns

The personal pronouns make a good place to begin an initiation into Cantonese grammar, since they are rather straightforward: they do not vary according to gender, case or social status. Nor are there any possessive forms as such, since the pronouns combine with the possessive **ge** to indicate possession (see Unit 5). The plural forms are produced in regular fashion by adding the suffix **-deih** to the corresponding singular forms.

<i>Person</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
first: I, we	<b>ngóh (óh)</b>	<b>ngóhdeih (óhdeih)</b>
second: you	<b>néih (léih)</b>	<b>néihdeih (léihdeih)</b>
third: he/she, they	<b>kéuih (héuih)</b>	<b>kéuihdeih (héuihdeih)</b>

Notice that each of the pronoun forms has alternative pronunciations. The forms in brackets are the result of sound changes, and are the object of a certain amount of controversy: courses rarely teach them; teachers may treat them as incorrect, and television advertising campaigns have even sought to outlaw them. Nevertheless in the case of 'you' **léih** has become by far the most common form, with initial **l-** replacing **n-**, while **óh** and **héuih** are also commonly heard.

### The suffix **-deih**

One of the few grammatical suffixes in the language, the suffix **-deih** cannot be used to form plural forms of nouns (e.g. we cannot use **\*sīnsāng-deih** to mean 'teachers'). Apart from the personal pronouns as shown above, its only uses are:

- (i) In the form **yàhn-deih** which serves as a kind of indefinite pronoun (people, one, etc.):

**Yàhndeih tái-jyuh léih**

People are watching you

**Mhóu chou yàhndeih**

Don't disturb (other) people

This form can also be used to refer indirectly to oneself:

**A: Léih dímáai nàh chēut sēng ga?**

Why don't you say anything?

**B: Yàhndeih mhóuyisi a**

Maybe I'm embarrassed

- (ii) In contracted forms with names, as in:

**Paul kéuihdeih → Paul-deih**

Paul and his family/friends

**A-Chán kéuihdeih → A-Chán-deih**

Chan and his family/company,  
etc.

## Using pronouns

Pronouns are used to refer to individuals, as in introductions:

**Ngóh giu Stephen**

My name is Stephen

**Ngóh haih go hohksāang**

I'm a student

**Kéuih haih Méihgwokyàhn**

He's American

**Ngóhdeih haih yàuhhaak**

We're tourists

As in many languages (such as Italian, Spanish and Japanese) pronouns can be omitted when they are understood from the context. Some typical examples of such contexts follow:

**A: Heui bīndouh a?**

(lit. go where?)

Where are you going?

**B: Fān ùkkéi**

(lit. return home)

I'm going home

**A: A-Yīng jōuh mātýéh gūng ga?**

(lit. Ying does what job?)

What does Ying do for a living?

- B: **Jouh wuhsih ge**  
 (*lit.* does nurse)  
 She's a nurse

Note that this also applies to objects, as in the following cases:

- A: **Yám-mh-yám jáu a?**  
 (*lit.* drink wine or not?)  
 Would you like some wine?
- B: **Mh yám la, ngōi saai**  
 (*lit.* not drink, thanks a lot)  
 I won't, thanks
- A: **Nī go sung bái léih ge**  
 (*lit.* this give to you)  
 This is for you
- B: **Dōjeh! Ngóh hóu jūngyi a!**  
 (*lit.* thank you! I very much like!)  
 Thank you! I like it!

Again, when several statements are made about the same subject, it is usually understood after its first mention. If you are introducing yourself, for example, it is sufficient to use **ngóh** once:

- Ngóh giu Mary, gām lín sahp-baat seui, làih Hēunggóng jouh**  
**gāuwuhh hohksāang**  
 (*lit.* I called Mary, this year eighteen years old, come Hong Kong as exchange student)  
 My name is Mary, [I'm] eighteen this year, [I] came to Hong Kong as an exchange student

## The third person: he, she and it

The third-person pronoun **kéuih** means 'he' or 'she', without distinction of gender. It is not normally used to refer to inanimate things, and hence there is typically nothing corresponding to the English pronoun *it*, whether as subject or object of the verb. For example, referring to a picture or piece of clothing:

- Hóu leng a! Ngóh yiu a!**  
 (*lit.* very nice! I want)  
 It's beautiful! I want it!



Again, a sequence of statements can be made about the same topic:

**Kéuih máaih-jó ga sǎn chē hóu gwai ge, hóu chái kéuih taaitái dōu jūngyi jēk**

(lit. he bought a new car, very expensive, fortunately his wife also likes)  
He's bought a new car, [it was] very expensive, fortunately his wife likes [it] too

Similarly, there is no counterpart to 'it' referring to the weather, or to nothing in particular:

**Gāmyaht hóu yíht a**

(lit. today very hot)  
It's hot today

**Lohk yúh la!**

(lit. falls rain)  
It's raining!

**Hóu làahn góng**

(lit. very hard to say)  
It's hard to say

## Reflexive jīhgei

The reflexive form **jīhgei** is used for all persons: myself, yourself, herself, ourselves, etc. It is used:

- (i) Alone, referring back to the subject of the sentence:

**Léih yiu súsām jiugu jīhgei**

(lit. you should carefully look after yourself)  
You should look after yourself carefully

**Mhóu sèhngyaht gwaai jīhgei**

(lit. don't always blame yourself)  
Don't blame yourself all the time

**Kéuih deui jīhgei hóu yáuh-seunsām**

(lit. he towards himself very confident)  
He has confidence in himself

- (ii) Reinforcing a pronoun:

**Ngóh jìhgéi m̀h wúih gám jòuh**  
 (lit. I myself not would so behave)  
 I myself would not behave like that

**Léih jìhgéi sìn jī daap-on**  
 (lit. you self only know answer)  
 Only you yourself know the answer

**A-Yān sèhngyaht jaan kéuih jìhgéi**  
 (lit. Yan always praise her self)  
 Yan is always praising herself

(iii) As an adverb meaning 'by oneself':

**Ngóh jìhgéi máaih sung jyú faahn**  
 (lit. I myself buy groceries cook rice)  
 I'll buy the groceries and cook by myself

**Léih yīnggōi jìhgéi lám chīngchó**  
 (lit. you should yourself think clearly)  
 You should think things over by yourself

**Kéuih séung jìhgéi jòuh haih-jyúyahm**  
 (lit. he want self do department chairperson)  
 He wants to be the department chairperson himself

## Exercise 4.1

Supply the missing pronouns:

- |                                   |                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 _____ jyuh hái Gáulūhng         | I live in Kowloon        |
| 2 Hóu hōisām gin dóu _____        | Glad to see you          |
| 3 _____ sīk _____                 | We know them             |
| 4 _____ haih go hóu yīsāng        | You are a nice doctor    |
| 5 _____ haih hohksāang            | You are students         |
| 6 _____ hóu jūngyi yāmngohk       | He likes music           |
| 7 _____ dá-jó-dihnwá héi lóuhbáan | I phoned the boss        |
| 8 _____ heui-gwo Oumún            | They've been to Macau    |
| 9 _____ geidāk _____              | She remembered me        |
| 10 _____ hóu gwa-jyuh _____       | They missed us very much |

## Exercise 4.2

Replace the italicized phrases with pronouns in the following sentences:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 <i>Síu Mihng hóu lengjái</i>                  | Ming is very handsome                  |
| 2 <i>Ngóh heui taam ngóh a-máh</i>              | I'm going to visit my grandmother      |
| 3 <i>Máh yisāng yī-hóu-jó géi go behngyáhn</i>  | Dr Ma has cured several patients       |
| 4 <i>Susan ga-jó John go sailóu</i>             | Susan has married John's brother       |
| 5 <i>Dī hohksāang ge gūngfo taai dō la</i>      | The students' homework is too much     |
| 6 <i>Lóuhbāan tūhng go beisyū git-jó-fān</i>    | The boss and the secretary got married |
| 7 <i>Ngóh hóu gwa-jyuh go léui</i>              | I'm missing my daughter very much      |
| 8 <i>Kéuih tái-jó dī tūhngsìh ge seun</i>       | She read her colleagues' letter(s)     |
| 9 <i>Ngóh tūhng ngóh sailóu yāchàih hahpjók</i> | My brother and I collaborate together  |
| 10 <i>Léih tūhng go jái hóu chíhyéung</i>       | You and your son look like each other  |

## † Exercise 4.3

Answer the following questions, considering whether a pronoun is needed or not:

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1 <i>Léih jūng-mh-jūngyi Hēunggóng a?</i> | Do you like Hong Kong?         |
| 2 <i>Kàhmyaht ünhei dím a?</i>            | How was the weather yesterday? |
| 3 <i>Bīngó hóyih bōng ngóh a?</i>         | Who can help me?               |
| 4 <i>Léih tóuh-mh-tóuh-ngoh a?</i>        | Are you hungry?                |
| 5 <i>Kéuihdeih jáu-jó meih a?</i>         | Have they left?                |
| 6 <i>Kéuih je-jó chín bēi bīngó a?</i>    | Who did he lend money to?      |
| 7 <i>Léih maaih-jó ga chē meih a?</i>     | Have you sold the car?         |
| 8 <i>Fūk wá leng-mh-leng a?</i>           | Is the picture beautiful?      |
| 9 <i>Ga chē jīng hóu meih a?</i>          | Is the car mended?             |
| 10 <i>Dī gúpiu yáuh-móuh sīng a?</i>      | Have the shares gone up?       |

# UNIT FIVE

## Possession: **ge**

**ge** is one of the most frequent words in Cantonese, used in several important grammatical patterns. One of its main uses is to indicate possession, as we can illustrate with the pronouns introduced in Unit 4:

<b>ngóh ge</b>	my, mine	<b>ngóhdeih ge</b>	our, ours
<b>léih ge</b>	your, yours	<b>léihdeih ge</b>	your, yours
<b>kéuih ge</b>	his/her, hers	<b>kéuihdeih ge</b>	their, theirs
<b>jihgéi ge</b>	one's own	<b>bīngó ge</b>	whose

As the two translations suggest, these are used in two ways:

1 Before a possessed noun:

<b>Ngóh ge deihi hái nīdoh</b>	My address is here
<b>Léih ge Gwóngdūng-wá m̃h cho</b>	Your Cantonese is not bad
<b>Kéuih ge gihnhōng mhaih géi hóu</b>	Her health is not too good
<b>Jihgéi ge gāihng jeui gányiu</b>	One's own family is most important

2 As predicates, usually following the verb **haih** 'be' (see Unit 7):

<b>Nī go haih léih ge</b>	This is yours
<b>Dī chín haih kéuih ge</b>	The money is his
<b>Haih-mhaih ngóh ge?</b>	Is it mine?

The verb **haih** 'be' can also be understood, so that the resulting sentence lacks a verb:

<b>Bá jē kéuih ge</b>	This umbrella is hers
<b>Jek māau kéuihdeih ge</b>	The cat is theirs
<b>Nī tiuh sósih bīngó ge?</b>	Whose key is this?

Some points to notice:

- The **ge** indicating possession is sometimes omitted, especially where there is a close intrinsic relationship between the possessor and possessed, as in the case of relatives and family members:

<b>kéuih sailóu</b>	her younger brother
<b>ngóh lóuhgūng</b>	my husband (colloquial)
<b>léih gūjē</b>	your aunt (father's younger sister)

These phrases can themselves serve as the possessor of another noun:

**Kéuih sailóu ge mahntàih hóu dō**  
Her (younger) brother's problems are many

**Ngóh lóuhgūng ge ūkkéi-yàhn làih saai**  
My husband's family have all come

**Léih gūjē ge mahtyihp hóu jìhk-chún**  
Your aunt's property is worth a lot money

- Before nouns, the appropriate classifier (see Unit 8) is often used in place of **ge**, especially in colloquial language:

<b>ngóh go léui</b>	my daughter
<b>kéuih ga chē</b>	his car
<b>léih gihh sām</b>	your shirt

This has a similar meaning to the corresponding phrase with **ge**, but denotes a particular individual or object. To specify more than one, the plural classifier **di** is used:

<b>ngóh di jàiléui</b>	my children
<b>kéuih di sām</b>	her clothes
<b>Peter di hohksāang</b>	Peter's students

See Unit 8 for more on classifiers.

### Exercise 5.1

Express the following by using the possessive marker provided (i.e. classifier, **ge** or **di**):

Example: my book (syū: bún) → **ngóh bún syū**

- 1 your nose (**beih: go**)
- 2 her friends (**páhngyáuh: ge/dí**)
- 3 her eyes (**ngáahn: deui**)
- 4 his desk (**tóit: jéung**)
- 5 my letters (**seun: ge/dí**)
- 6 her handbag (**sáudóit: go**)
- 7 my foot (**geuk: jek**)
- 8 Hong Kong's weather (**tínhei: ge**)
- 9 today's news (**sānmán: ge/dí**)
- 10 tomorrow's temperature (**heiwān: ge**)

## Exercise 5.2

Express the following by using the appropriate possessive marker:

Example: Your computer is too slow → **Ngóh go dihnlóuh taai maahn**

- 1 Compliment someone on their shoes (**deui hàaih**)  
\_\_\_\_\_ **hàaih hóu leng wo**
- 2 Ask for the price of your friend's coat (**gihn lāu**)  
\_\_\_\_\_ **lāu géi dô chí a?**
- 3 Describe Hong Kong's airport (**go gēichèuhng**) to a friend  
\_\_\_\_\_ **gēichèuhng hóu daaih ga**
- 4 Your sports car (**ga páauchē**) has broken down  
\_\_\_\_\_ **páauchē waaih-jó**
- 5 More than one of your relatives (**chānchīk**) is coming to see you  
\_\_\_\_\_ **chānchīk làih taam ngóh**
- 6 Your wife (**taaitáai**) is waiting for you  
\_\_\_\_\_ **taaitáai dāng-gán ngóh**
- 7 Your son (**jái**) likes to sing  
\_\_\_\_\_ **jái jūngyí cheung-gō**
- 8 Your children (**jáiléui**) are in secondary school  
\_\_\_\_\_ **jáiléui duhk-gán jūnghohk**

## Exercise 5.3

Translate into Cantonese:

- 1 This watch (**jek sáubiu**) is mine
- 2 The piano (**go gongkàhm**) is hers
- 3 That house (**gāan ūk**) is theirs

- 4 These books (**dī syū**) are yours
- 5 Those pictures (**dī wá**) are Miss Chan's
- 6 This place (**go wái**) is ours
- 7 This office (**go baahn-gūng-sāt**) is Mr Lam's
- 8 The money (**dī chín**) is my wife's

# UNIT SIX

## Possession and existence: **yáuh**

The verb **yáuh**, like 'have' in English, serves both as a main verb ('I have a question') and as an auxiliary ('Have you sent the letter?'). Like all verbs in Cantonese, it keeps the same form for different persons:

<b>Ngóh yáuh yāt go jái yāt go léui</b>	I have a son and a daughter
<b>Léih juhng yáuh gēiwuih</b>	You still have a chance
<b>Kéuih yáuh géi gāan ūk</b>	She has several houses

Unusually, however, it has one irregular form: **móuh** is the negative form of **yáuh**. So, 'I don't have' is **ngóh móuh** (not **\*ngóh m̀h yáuh**):

<b>Léih móuh gīngyihm</b>	You don't have experience
<b>Ngóhdeih móuh sailouhjái</b>	We don't have any children
<b>Kéuihdeih móuh ūkkéi</b>	They don't have a home

The question form is composed by putting **yáuh** 'have' and **móuh** 'not have' together as **yáuh-móuh** (not **\*yáuh-m̀h-yáuh**):

<b>Léih yáuh-móuh mahntàih a?</b>	Do you have any questions?
<b>Ngóhdeih yáuh-móuh sihgaan a?</b>	Do we have time?
<b>Kéuihdeih yáuh-móuh chin a?</b>	Do they have money?

See Unit 23 for more on questions of this kind.

### Existential **yáuh**

**yáuh** can also mean 'there is' (like Spanish 'hay', French 'il y a', etc.). Similarly, **móuh** can mean 'There is not' and **yáuh-móuh** 'Is there ...?':



**Héunggóng yáuh hóu dō dīksí**

(lit. Hong Kong have very many taxis)

There are lots of taxis in Hong Kong

**Nídouh móuh hùhngmāu**

(lit. here not-have pandas)

There are no pandas here

**Tóí seuhngmihh yáuh géi jek díp**

(lit. table on-top have a few plates)

There are a few plates on the table

Notice that no preposition is needed: the sentence simply begins with the place expression (see Unit 13).

**yáuh** in this sense also serves to introduce an indefinite noun phrase:

**Yáuh (yāt) go yàhn wán léih** (not \*Yāt go yàhn wán léih)

(lit. have a person seeking you)

A man is looking for you

**Yáuh géi go bohksāang hóu lāu**

(lit. have several students very angry)

Several students are angry

**Yáuh hóu dō haakyàhn làih-jó**

(lit. have many guests came)

Many guests came

A verb can be added to show what is to be done with the item introduced by **yáuh/móuh**:

**Ngóh gāmyaht yáuh gūngfo jowh**

(lit. I today have homework to do)

I have homework to do today

**Nídouh móuh sām máaih**

(lit. here have no clothes to buy)

There are no clothes to buy here

**Yahpbihh yáuh-móuh yéh sihk a?**

(lit. inside have or have not anything to eat)

Is there anything to eat inside?

Note that there is no need to distinguish infinitives from the regular form of the verb.

## yáuh as auxiliary

**yáuh** also serves as an auxiliary verb, rather like 'have' in English 'They have left', but normally only in the negative form **móuh** and in questions as **yáuh-móuh**:

**Kéuih gāmyaht móuh fāan-gūng** He hasn't been to work today  
**Ngóh móuh jough-gwo sīnsāang** I've never been a teacher

- A: **Kéuihdeih yáuh-móuh bün ũk a?** Have they moved house?  
 B: **Yáuh a (bün-jó la)** Yes (they have)  
 A: **Léih yáuh-móuh hohk-gwo** Have you learnt Putonghua?  
**Póutūng-wá a?**  
 B: **Móuh a (móuh hohk-gwo a)** No (I haven't)

Note the close relationship here between **yáuh/móuh** and the aspect markers **jó** and **gwo** (**gwo** can appear in sentences with **móuh** or **yáuh-móuh** but **jó** cannot: see Unit 18). The use of **yáuh** alone as an auxiliary is rare, but a useful idiom is **yáuh lohk** 'Someone's getting off' (used on minibuses, and so on to express the wish to get off):

**Yáuh lohk, mǝi** (Someone's) getting off, please  
**Chihmǝhn yáuh lohk** (Someone's) getting off just ahead

## Adjectives formed with yáuh

**yáuh** and **móuh** can also be added to nouns to form adjectives:

<b>yáuh</b>	+	<b>chín</b> money	→	<b>yáuh-chín</b>	rich
<b>yáuh</b>	+	<b>sām</b> heart	→	<b>yáuh-sām</b>	thoughtful, kind
<b>yáuh</b>	+	<b>yuhng</b> use	→	<b>yáuh-yuhng</b>	useful
<b>móuh</b>	+	<b>yuhng</b> use	→	<b>móuh-yuhng</b>	useless
<b>yáuh</b>	+	<b>liú</b> substance	→	<b>yáuh-liú</b>	substantial, learned
<b>móuh</b>	+	<b>liú</b> substance	→	<b>móuh-liú</b>	vacuous, ignorant

The adjectives thus formed can then be modified in the usual way (see Unit 9):

**Dôjeh léihdeih gam yáuh-sām**

Thank you for being so thoughtful

**Kéuih lóuhgūng hóu yáuh-chín, bātgo taai móuh-líu**

Her husband is very rich but too vacuous

## Exercise 6.1

Turn the following statements into questions, positive or negative statements as specified:

Example: **Ngóh yáuh mahntàih** I have a problem → negative: **Ngóh móuh mahntàih**

- 1 **Ngóh yáuh yigin** (I have an opinion) → negative
- 2 **Léih yáuh beimaht** (You have a secret) → question
- 3 **Gāmyaht yáuh sūsik** (Today we have the latest information) → negative
- 4 **Faatgwok yáuh Jūnggwokyàhn** (There are Chinese people in France) → question
- 5 **Chéutbihn móuh yàhn** (There's nobody outside) → positive
- 6 **Kéuih yáuh behng** (She has a disease) → negative
- 7 **Léih yáuh láihmaht** (You have a gift) → question
- 8 **Bán syüyáuh Jūngmàhnjìh** (There are Chinese characters in the book) → negative
- 9 **Sātihn yáuh fóchē-jaahm** (There's a railway station at Shatin) → question
- 10 **Kāhmyaht móuh tsuiyèuhng** (There was no sunshine yesterday) → positive

## Exercise 6.2

Answer the following questions about yourself using **yáuh** or **móuh** as appropriate:

- 1 **Léih yáuh-móuh yāt haak mǎn a** (\$100)?
- 2 **Léih hái Hēunggóng yáuh-móuh pàhngyáuh a** (friends)?
- 3 **Léihdeih yáuh-móuh dīhnlóuh a** (computer)?
- 4 **Léih gān fóng yáuh-móuh hūngwái a** (space in your room)?
- 5 **Léih yáuh-móuh sihgwan hohk Gwóngdūng-wá a** (time to study Cantoucese)?
- 6 **Léihdeih yáuh-móuh heui-gwo Gwóngjāu a** (been to Guangzhou)?
- 7 **Léih gāmyaht yáuh-móuh tái sāmán a** (watch the news today)?

- 8 Léih yáuh-móuh hìngcheui jyun gūng a (interested in changing your job)?

### Exercise 6.3

Translate these questions into Cantonese:

- 1 Do you have a car (**chē**)?
- 2 Do you have brothers or sisters (**hīngdaih jímuih**)?
- 3 Do you have a mobile phone (**sáutàih dihnwá**)?
- 4 Have you been to Beijing (**Bákīng**)?
- 5 Has she visited (**taam-gwo**) you?
- 6 There are no birds (**jeukjái**) here.
- 7 There are many minibuses (**siubā**) in Hong Kong.
- 8 Is there anybody inside (**yahpbihn**)?
- 9 Are there students in the classroom (**fosāt**)?
- 10 Is there any good news (**hóu siusik**) today?

# UNIT SEVEN

## Being: **haih**

The verb **haih** 'to be' is straightforward in form, but used in ways which do not always match those of English and other European languages. It is used to introduce noun phrases, as in making introductions and identifying people:

<b>Ngóh haih Chàhn Siu Míhng</b>	I'm Chan Siu Ming
<b>Léih haih bīngō a?</b>	Who are you?
<b>Kéuih haih yīsāng</b>	She's a doctor

As we saw in Unit 5, many such statements can also be made without **haih**, especially when a sentence particle such as the explanatory **lèihga** is added (see Unit 25):

<b>Nī go haih ngóh làahm-pàhngyáuh</b>	This is my boyfriend
or <b>Nī go ngóh làahm-pàhngyáuh (lèihga)</b>	
<b>Ngóhdeih haih Chuihjáuyàhn</b>	We are Chiu Chow (people)
or <b>Ngóhdeih Chuihjáuyàhn (lèihga)</b>	

Note in particular that **haih** is not used with predicative adjectives, which are typically introduced by **hóu** (*lit.* 'very'; see Unit 9):

<b>Ngóh yìhgā hóu mòhng</b>	I'm busy now
(not * <b>Ngóh yìhgā haih hóu mòhng</b> )	
<b>Léih gājē hóu leng</b>	Your (elder) sister is beautiful
(not * <b>Léih gājē haih hóu leng</b> )	
<b>Ngóh tùhng kéuih hóu suhk</b>	I know him well ( <i>lit.</i> I with him familiar)
(not * <b>Ngóh tùhng kéuih haih hóu suhk</b> )	

## haih showing agreement

**haih** also serves to indicate agreement and as an answer to certain types of question, **haih** meaning 'yes' and its negative form **mhaih** 'no':

- |                          |                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| A: Hóu gwai wo           | It's very expensive       |
| B: Haih a                | Yes, it is                |
| A: Léih jǎnhaih seun mē? | Do you really believe it? |
| B: Mhaih a               | No, I don't               |

**haih** should not be taken simply as a counterpart to 'yes', however, since:

(i) **haih** can indicate agreement with a negative sentence:

- |                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| A: Léih mǎh seun àh?      | Don't you believe it?     |
| B: Haih a                 | No (I don't)              |
| A: Kéuihdeih meih dou mē? | Haven't they arrived yet? |
| B: Haih a                 | No (they haven't)         |

(ii) The most common types of question do not take **haih** for an answer. Instead, the verb of the original question is repeated (see Unit 23):

- |  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| A: Ngóhdeih heui-mǎh-heui máaih yéh a? | Are we going shopping? |
| B: Heui a                              | Yes (not *haih)        |
| A: Léih jǔng-mǎh-jǔngyi a?             | Do you like it?        |
| B: Jǔngyi a                            | Yes (not *haih)        |

## haih versus hái

Notice the difference in tone between **haih** and **hái**, which can also be translated as 'be' but in the sense of being located:

- |      |          |      |                         |                    |
|------|----------|------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| haih | be       | e.g. | Kéuih haih Yáhtbúnnyàhn | She's Japanese     |
|      |          |      | Kéuih haih haauijéung   | He's the principal |
| hái  | be at/in | e.g. | Kéuih hái Seuhngói      | She's in Shanghai  |
|      |          |      | Ngóh hái syúfóng        | I'm in the study   |

## Emphatic haih and ge

**haih** can serve to emphasize the following word(s), especially in concert with the particle **ge** at the end of the sentence:

**Haih léih bōng ngóh ge** (emphasizing the subject **léih**)

It was you who helped me

**Nī bún syū haih bīngō sung ga?** (emphasizing the subject **bīngō**)

(lit. this book is who gave)

Who was it that gave (us) this book?

**Fūng seun haih gāmyaht gei dou ge** (emphasizing the adverb **gāmyaht**)

(lit. the letter is today arrived)

It was today the letter arrived

This formula is especially useful because, Cantonese being a tone language, there is limited scope for emphasizing a word through stress as is commonly done in English as in 'The letter arrived *today*'. The particle **ge** is characteristic of assertions (see Unit 25).

## Exercise 7.1

Answer the questions affirmatively or negatively as indicated. Add the particle **a** for politeness.

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1 Léih chih dou àh?            | Are you late? (answer: no)                |
| 2 Léih héi-jó-sān làh?         | Have you woken up? (yes)                  |
| 3 Léih behng-jó àh?            | Are you sick? (no)                        |
| 4 Kéuih jáu-jó mē?             | Has he left? (yes)                        |
| 5 Léih gin-gwo ngóh mē?        | Have you seen me before? (no)             |
| 6 Kéuih sik léih ge mē?        | Does she know you? (no)                   |
| 7 Kéuih fan-jó làh?            | Has she fallen asleep? (yes)              |
| 8 Kéuih yāusik-gán àh?         | Is he resting? (yes)                      |
| 9 Kéuih hóu guih àh?           | Is he tired? (yes)                        |
| 10 Máh gausauh hoi-gán wui àh? | Is Professor Ma having a meeting?<br>(no) |
| 11 Léih mih sik kéuih mē?      | Don't you know him? (no)                  |
| 12 Léih msái fān gūng àh?      | Don't you need to go to work?<br>(no)     |

## Exercise 7.2

Choose **haih** or **hái** as required:

- |                                 |                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Kéuihdeih _____ Méihgwokyàhn  | They are American         |
| 2 Kéuih _____ ngóh sailóu       | He's my brother           |
| 3 Kéuih _____ hohkhaauh         | She's at school           |
| 4 Kéuihdeih m̀h _____ Hēunggóng | They are not in Hong Kong |
| 5 Ngóh _____ Seuhng hóiyàhn     | I'm Shanghaiese           |
| 6 Go dói _____ kéuih ge         | The bag is his            |
| 7 Léih Sāang _____ gūngsī       | Mr Lee is at the office   |
| 8 Ngóhdeih _____ pàhngyáuh      | We're friends             |
| 9 Ngóh go jái _____ ūkkéi       | My son is home            |
| 10 Kéuih _____ ngóh tùnghohk    | He's my classmate         |

## † Exercise 7.3

Use **haih** and **ge** to emphasize the italicized word(s):

Example: Ngóh *gaau* Yīngm̀n I teach English → Ngóh **haih** *gaau* Yīngm̀n **ge**

- |                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Lóuhbáan góng b́ei ngóh tēng        | <i>The boss</i> told me               |
| 2 Ngóh b́ei bún syū léih              | I gave you the <i>book</i>            |
| 3 Kéuih <i>gām</i> jīu jáu            | He left <i>this morning</i>           |
| 4 Gíhn sāam <i>géisih</i> máaih       | <i>When</i> was this shirt bought?    |
| 5 Go chēung <i>bīngó</i> h́oi?        | <i>Who</i> opened the window?         |
| 6 Ngóh <i>hái</i> nīdouh dāng léih    | I'll wait for you <i>here</i>         |
| 7 Kéuih <i>taaitái</i> wán dóu        | <i>His wife</i> found it              |
| 8 Kéuih <i>hái</i> Taaigwok johng chē | He had a car crash <i>in Thailand</i> |



# UNIT EIGHT

## Noun classifiers

To refer to a certain number of items, Cantonese (like other varieties of Chinese and many Asian languages) calls for a classifier (or measure) after the number. While in English relatively few nouns have such words associated with them, (for example 'a brace of pheasants', 'twenty head of cattle'), in Cantonese all nouns have such words and they must be used, for example:

<b>yāt go yàhn</b>	one person
<b>léuhng tsiuh yú</b>	two fish
<b>sei jek gáu</b>	four dogs
<b>sahp tou hei</b>	ten films

Classifiers pose two different problems:

- (i) which one to use with which noun;
- (ii) when and where to use them.

First, however, it is useful to distinguish some sub-types of classifier.

### Measures

These are in the narrow sense words used in counting quantities as in 'two dozen eggs':

<b>léuhng bohng ngàuhyhk</b>	two pounds of beef
<b>yāt gān choi</b>	a catty of vegetables (1 catty = 22 ounces)
<b>bun dā gāidáan</b>	half a dozen eggs

## Containers

These form an open-ended category since any container can serve as a measure:

<b>sām búi chàh</b>	three cups of tea
<b>léuhng hahp tóng</b>	two boxes of sweets
<b>yāt bāau máih</b>	a bag of (uncooked) rice
<b>yāt dihp chòi</b>	a dish of vegetables

These container words can also be used as nouns in their own right, in which case they generally take the classifier **go**:

<b>yāt go wún</b>	a bowl	<b>léuhng go háp</b>	two boxes
<b>dō yāt go búi</b>	another glass/cup	<b>gái jek díp</b>	several plates

## Collective classifiers

These refer to a grouping of items:

<b>nī bāan hohksāang</b>	this class of students
<b>gó deui laahpsaap</b>	that pile of rubbish
<b>yāt daahp syū</b>	a pile of books
<b>yāt tou sán sām</b>	a set of new clothes
<b>gó deui hàaih</b>	that pair of shoes

Unfortunately, not all things that are treated as pairs in English take **deui**: 'a pair of trousers' is **yāt tuih fu**, 'a pair of scissors' **yāt bá gaaujín**. On the other hand, there are other uses of **deui** which are understandable:

**ngóh deui sáu**  
(lit. my pair (of) hands)  
my (two) hands

**yāt deui fūfúh**  
(lit. one pair couple)  
a (married) couple

**nī deui mālélui**  
(lit. this pair twin girls)  
these twin girls

## Plurals and quantities with dī

The word **dī** can be seen as a special kind of measure, or more precisely as a collective classifier. It is used for both countable and uncountable nouns:

(a) referring to an unspecified number of countable items:

<b>Dī cháang hóu tihm</b>	The oranges are nice and sweet
<b>Ngóh heui taam dī pàhngyáuh</b>	I'm going to visit some friends
<b>Kéuih dī túhngsih taai mòhng</b>	Her colleagues are too busy

(b) referring to quantities of uncountable substances:

<b>Dī séui mih gau yih</b>	The water is not hot enough
<b>Ngóh yiu máaih dī sīnnúaih</b>	I need to buy some fresh milk
<b>Léih dī chàh hóu hēung</b>	Your tea smells good

## Which classifier?

There are dozens of different classifiers, from the ubiquitous **go** to very specific items like **bún** in **bún syū** 'the book'. As the term suggests, classifiers generally serve to sort nouns into semantic classes of objects:

Classifier	Semantic class	Examples	
<b>bá</b>	tools, instruments	<b>bá dóu</b>	knife
<b>ga</b>	machines, vehicles	<b>ga chē</b>	the car
<b>gāan</b>	buildings	<b>gāan ūk</b>	the house
<b>gihn</b>	most clothes	<b>gihn sām</b>	shirt, dress
<b>go</b>	people	<b>yāt go yisāng</b>	a doctor
	abstract things	<b>nī go kyutdihng</b>	this decision
		<b>yāt go muhng</b>	a dream
<b>jek</b>	most animals	<b>jek gán</b>	a dog
	one of a pair	<b>yāt jek sáu</b>	one hand

A further important criterion is that many common classifiers categorize objects by their shape:

Classifier	Characteristics	Examples	
<b>faai</b>	vertical surface	<b>yāt faai geng</b>	a mirror
<b>fūk</b>	square/rectangular	<b>yāt fūk wá</b>	a picture
<b>jéung</b>	flat surface	<b>yāt jéung tóí</b>	a table
<b>jī</b>	cylindrical	<b>jī bāt</b>	a pen/pencil

<b>lāp</b>	small and round	<b>yāt lāp tóng</b>	a sweet
<b>tiuh</b>	long and narrow	<b>tiuh louh</b>	the road

The shape criterion can override the semantic class criterion, so that animals and items of clothing distinguished by their elongated shape take **tiuh**, rather than **jek** or **gihn**:

<b>tiuh yú</b>	fish	<b>tiuh kwáhn</b>	skirt/dress
<b>tiuh sèh</b>	snake	<b>tiuh fu</b>	trousers

The appropriate classifier (or measure) can usually be checked in a dictionary, although it should be borne in mind that alternative classifiers may exist for the same noun. A computer, for example, is classified variously as a machine (**yāt bouh dīhnlóuh**), or as a mere object (**yāt go dīhnlóuh**).

## Using classifiers

The main cases in which a classifier must be used are (illustrated with the commonest classifiers, such as **go**):

(i) Following a number:

<b>yāt go yīsāng</b>	one doctor	<b>sāam go yáhn</b>	three people
<b>léuhng go dīhnlóuh</b>	two computers	<b>sahp go háp</b>	ten boxes

(ii) With the demonstratives **nī** or **ī** 'this' and **gó** 'that':

<b>nī go sailouh</b>	this child	<b>gó go behngyáhn</b>	that patient
<b>nī go yínyáhn</b>	this actor	<b>gó go chéung</b>	that window

While these usages may be familiar to readers who know Mandarin, two other important uses are more characteristically Cantonese:

(iii) In a possessive construction:

<b>ngóh go jái</b>	my son	<b>kéuih gāan fóng</b>	her room
<b>léih gihn sāam</b>	your dress	<b>léihdeih chàhng láu</b>	your flat

This is a colloquial alternative to the possessive construction with **ge** (see Unit 5).

(iv) With a noun alone:

<b>go hohksāang</b>	a/the student	<b>go gaausauh</b>	a/the professor
<b>gihn sāam</b>	a/the dress	<b>jek gáu-jái</b>	a/the puppy

This usage typically refers to a particular item. When the noun it goes with comes before the verb it is definite (generally corresponding to 'the'):

<b>Gihn sāam hóu gwai</b>	The dress is expensive
<b>Ga chē jáu-jó</b>	The car has gone
<b>Go waih hóu tung</b>	The stomach hurts

When the classifier and noun come after the verb it can be definite, but can also refer to an indefinite, but specific item ('a certain ...'):

<b>Kéuih máaih-jó gihn sāam</b>	She's bought a/the dress
<b>Ngóh gāmyaht tái-jó bún syū</b>	I read a/the book today
<b>Kéuihdeih hoi-jó go wuhháu</b>	They opened an/the account

### Exercise 8.1

Fill the gap with a suitable measure:

- 1 yāt \_\_\_\_\_ baahkchoi (Chinese cabbage)
- 2 bun \_\_\_\_\_ muihgwai-fā (roses)
- 3 yāt \_\_\_\_\_ seun (letter)
- 4 yāt \_\_\_\_\_ jyūyuhk (pork)
- 5 yāt \_\_\_\_\_ sīhgaan (time)
- 6 léuhng \_\_\_\_\_ bējáu (beer)
- 7 yāt \_\_\_\_\_ tō-húai (slippers)
- 8 géi \_\_\_\_\_ sāijōng (suit)

### Exercise 8.2

Order the following items at a restaurant, adding **ngōi** for politeness at the beginning or end of the sentence (see Unit 27):

- 1 two glasses (**būi**) of red wine (**hūhng jáu**)
- 2 a dish (**dīhp**) of fried noodles (**cháu mihn**)
- 3 three bowls (**wún**) of rice (**faahn**)
- 4 another pair (**deui**) of chopsticks (**faaijī**)
- 5 a bottle (**jēun**) of water (**séui**)
- 6 a menu (**chāan-pái**)
- 7 two wine glasses (**jáu-būi**)

- 8 a pot (**wùh**) of hot water (**yiht séui**)  
 9 a piece (**gihn**) of cake (**daahn-gôu**)  
 10 a cup (**búi**) of coffee (**gafé**)

### Exercise 8.3

Match the following items with the appropriate classifier or measure:

#### A clothing

- |                           |               |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| 1 <b>tāi</b> tie          | a <b>gihn</b> |
| 2 <b>hāsih</b> (one) shoe | b <b>tiuh</b> |
| 3 <b>sāijōng</b> suit     | c <b>déng</b> |
| 4 <b>móu</b> hat          | d <b>jek</b>  |
| 5 <b>láu</b> coat         | e <b>tou</b>  |

#### B stationery

- |                                |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 <b>gaauijín</b> scissors     | a <b>fúk</b>   |
| 2 <b>bāt</b> pen               | b <b>bá</b>    |
| 3 <b>báan</b> board            | c <b>jéung</b> |
| 4 <b>yàuh-wá</b> oil painting  | d <b>jī</b>    |
| 5 <b>kāatpín</b> business card | e <b>faai</b>  |

### Exercise 8.4

Choose the appropriate classifier to replace **ge** in the following possessive expressions:

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| 1 <b>kéuih ge</b> <b>sáubiu</b> her watch                   | a <b>jéung</b> |
| 2 <b>lóuhbáan ge</b> <b>tóí</b> the boss's desk             | b <b>tiuh</b>  |
| 3 <b>gó chàhng láu ge</b> <b>mùhn</b> the door of that flat | c <b>jek</b>   |
| 4 <b>ngóh ge</b> <b>sósih</b> my key                        | d <b>ga</b>    |
| 5 <b>léih ge</b> <b>séunggēi</b> your camera                | e <b>douh</b>  |

# UNIT NINE

## Adjectives

Adjectives are words which denote properties or qualities. Typically they serve to modify or describe nouns, and can also appear in comparative forms (see Unit 12). Since the dividing line between adjectives and verbs is not always clear, the Chinese equivalents of adjectives are often termed stative verbs. While learners need not worry about whether there 'are' adjectives in Cantonese, it is useful to remember that the words in question generally behave like verbs: that is, what applies to verbs generally applies to adjectives too.

### Attributive adjectives

These modify the noun. All such adjectives come before the noun they modify:

pèhng ge sāam  
gwāai ge sailouhjái  
cho ge kyutdihng

cheap clothes  
good, obedient children  
a wrong decision

The particle **ge**, which we have already seen in possessive constructions (Unit 5), serves here to link the adjective and noun. The adjective can be modified by **hóu** 'very', **jeui** 'most', etc.:

hóu káhnlínk ge hohksāang  
jeui línhēng ge boksih  
gam daaih ge yinghéung

hard-working students  
the youngest PhD  
such a big influence

## Predicative adjectives

These are used to state that something has a certain property. The verb **haih** 'to be' is not used (see Unit 7), but instead the adverb **hóu** is usually included:

<b>Ngóh hóu hóisām</b>	I'm happy
<b>Dī tōng hóu hàahm</b>	The soup is salty
<b>Kéuih gihn sām hóu leng</b>	Her dress is beautiful
<b>Gāmyaht hóu sǎp</b>	It's humid today

**hóu** by itself can mean 'good' or 'very', but when used in this way it does not really mean 'very' but is merely part of the syntax of predicative adjectives.

## Modifying adjectives

Other modifiers such as **gái** 'quite' and **gam** 'so' can appear in place of **hóu**, for example:

<b>Dī gēipiu gét pèhng</b>	The air tickets are quite cheap
<b>Léih go sǎutǎih dīhnlóuh gam gwai</b>	Your laptop computer is so expensive
<b>Go daahn-gōu taai tihm</b>	The cake is too sweet
<b>Ōnchyùhn jeui gányiu</b>	Safety is most important
<b>Tiuh sing gau (saai) chéuhng</b>	The string is (more than) long enough

## Reduplicated adjectives

Another strategy to modify the meaning of an adjective is reduplication together with the suffix **-dái**:

<b>dīn</b> crazy → <b>dīn-dīn-dái</b>	rather crazy
<b>fú</b> bitter → <b>fú-fú-dái</b>	rather bitter
<b>sau</b> thin → <b>sau-sáu-dái</b>	rather thin
<b>tihm</b> sweet → <b>tihm-tim-dái</b>	rather sweet
<b>lyúhn</b> warm → <b>lyúhn-lyún-dái</b>	rather warm
<b>muhn</b> bored/boring → <b>muhn-mún-dái</b>	rather bored (or boring)

Note the change to a high rising tone on the repeated syllable (see Unit 3): this happens in all cases except where the original tone is high level



(as in **dīn-dīn-déi** 'rather crazy') or already high rising (as in **fú-fú-déi** 'rather bitter'). These forms are used to qualify the force of an adjective:

<b>Dī Jūng-yuehk fú-fú-déi</b>	Chinese medicine is rather bitter
<b>Tūh gāai sāp-sāp-déi</b>	The street is a bit wet
<b>Tou hei muhn-mún-déi</b>	The film was fairly boring
<b>Ngóh gokdāk muhn-mún-déi</b>	I feel rather bored

Note that these forms are not used together with **hóu** or other modifiers such as **gái** 'quite':

<b>Nī go gaausauh dīn-dīn-déi ge</b>	This professor is pretty crazy
(not * <b>Nī go gaausauh hóu dīn-dīn-déi ge</b> )	
<b>Go wuhsih fèih-féi-déi</b>	The nurse is rather chubby
(not * <b>Go wuhsih géi fèih-féi-déi</b> )	

Such reduplicated forms are also used as adverbs (Unit 10).

## Exercise 9.1

Use appropriate predicative adjectives to describe the following:

Example: the film on an aeroplane: **Tou hei hóu chéuhng** The film was long

- 1 your girlfriend
- 2 your children or your friend's children
- 3 a teacher you like
- 4 a colleague at work
- 5 your good points (to your boss)
- 6 your favourite film star
- 7 a car you would like to own
- 8 the food at school or university
- 9 the weather in Hong Kong
- 10 a novel you have been reading

## Exercise 9.2

Add an appropriate attributive adjective to modify the following:

Example: **Ngóh gòhgō hái yāt gān hóu yáuh-méng ge gūngsi jowh-yéh**  
My (elder) brother works for a famous company

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 Kéuih ùkkéi yáuh go _____<br>haak-tēng  | At home there is a . . . living room             |
| 2 Deuimihn yáuh gāan _____<br>chāantēng   | Across the street there is a . . .<br>restaurant |
| 3 Ngóh jeui gahn tái-gwo bún _____<br>syū | I have recently read a . . . book                |
| 4 Ngóh séung yiu jek _____ gáu-jái        | I would like a . . . puppy                       |
| 5 Ngóh tái-gwo yāt tou _____ hei          | I have seen a . . . film                         |
| 6 Ngóhdeih yáuh dĩ _____ gūngfo           | We have some . . . homework                      |
| 7 Kéuih ùkkéi yáuh go _____<br>mahntàih   | There is a . . . problem at his home             |
| 8 Ngóh yihchihn yáuh go _____<br>lóuhsi   | I used to have a . . . teacher                   |

### Exercise 9.3

Substitute a modifier (e.g. géi, gam, taai, gau saai) for hóu:

- |                              |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Ngóhdeih hóu múhnyi        | We are satisfied        |
| 2 Kéuih hóu lèk              | She's smart (capable)   |
| 3 Kéuihdeih hóu gui          | They're tired           |
| 4 Dī sailouljái hóu dākyl    | The children are cute   |
| 5 Tou hei hóu lohngmaahn     | The film is romantic    |
| 6 Kéuih dĩ tàuhfaat hóu dyún | Her hair is very short  |
| 7 Dī gāsi hóu pèhng          | The furniture is cheap  |
| 8 Go gaasauh hóu yáuh-méng   | The professor is famous |
| 9 Go hohksāng hóu láahn      | The student is lazy     |
| 10 Dī séung hóu leng         | The photos are pretty   |

### Exercise 9.4

Form reduplicated adjectives to express the meaning based on the adjective provided, remembering the change of tone:

Example: The baby is chubby (fèih) Go bñhñ fèih-féi-déi

- This dish (dīhp sung) is a bit hot (laaht)
- The soup (dī tōng) is rather sour (syūn)
- Your clothes (dī sām) are a bit wet (sāp)
- The weather (tínhei) is rather cold (dung)
- Her face (faai mihn) is rather round (yùhn)
- Her eyes (deui ngáahn) are a little red (hùhng)

- 7 His office (**go baahn-gūng-sāt**) is rather messy (**lyuhn**)
- 8 The button (**lāp láu**) is rather loose (**sūng**)
- 9 Your glasses (**fu ngáahn-géng**) are rather fuzzy (**mùhng**)
- 10 Your husband (**lóuhgūng**) is a bit drunk (**jeui**)

# UNIT TEN

## Adverbs of manner

Several types of adverb phrase can be used to modify a verb or verb phrase:

- with **dāk**
- with **gám**
- with reduplication.

These types of adverb phrase are generally based on adjectives (see Unit 9).

### 1 Adverb phrases with **dāk**

The most general form of adverbial phrase is formed with **dāk** and an adjective after the verb. The order is thus: verb – **dāk** – adjective. As usual the adjective is normally preceded by a modifier such as **hóu** or **géi**, and so on (see Unit 9):

**Ga chē hàahng dāk hóu maahn**  
(*lit.* the car travel manner very slow)  
The car moves very slowly

**Dī haakyàhn síhk dāk géi hōisām**  
(*lit.* the guests eat manner quite happy)  
The guests are eating quite happily

**Go góngsī góng dāk taai faai**  
(*lit.* the lecturer speak manner too fast)  
The lecturer talks too fast

When the verb is followed by an object, the verb is repeated so that **dāk** immediately follows the verb:

**Ngóh cheung-gō cheung dāk hóu chā**  
 (lit. I sing songs sing manner very bad)  
 I sing very badly

**Kéuih waahk-wá waahk dāk géi lēng**  
 (lit. she paints pictures paints manner quite nice)  
 She draws quite nicely

**Léih góng-yéh góng dāk taai daaih-sēng**  
 (lit. you speak things speak manner too big voice)  
 You speak too loud

## 2 Adverb phrases with gám

An adjective together with **gám** 'thus' forms an adverbial phrase which comes before the verb:

**Dī gwūnjung hóu daaih-sēng gám paak-sáu**  
 (lit. the audience very big voice thus clap hands)  
 The audience applauded loudly

**Go yàuh-haak hóu yáuh-láihmaauh gám mahn ngóh**  
 (lit. the tourist very politely thus asked me)  
 The tourist asked me very politely

**Go sīgēi hóu daaih-lihk gám sāan mūhn**  
 (lit. the driver very big-force thus closed door)  
 The driver closed the door hard

Note here also the use of **gám** by itself or **gám yéung** to mean 'in this way':

**Ngóh mē wúih gám góng**  
 I wouldn't put it like that

**Kéuih mē yīnggōi gám yéung sái chín**  
 He shouldn't waste money in this way

## 3 Reduplicated adverbs

A limited number of adverbs of manner are formed by repeating an adjective and adding the suffix **-dái**:

<b>gwāai</b>	obedient	→	<b>gwāai-gwāai-déi</b>	obediently
<b>hēng</b>	light	→	<b>hēng-hēng-déi</b>	lightly

These are placed before the verb they modify:

**Léih yiu gwāai-gwāai-déi jough gūngfo**  
*(lit. you need obediently do homework)*  
 You have to obediently do your homework

**Yáuh yàhn hēng-hēng-déi paak mùhn**  
*(lit. have person lightly knock door)*  
 Someone knocked lightly on the door

A few such forms are also used without **-déi**:

<b>maahn</b>	slow	→	<b>maahn-máan hàahng</b>	to walk slowly
<b>hōi-sám</b>	happy	→	<b>hōi-hōi-sám-sám jough yéh</b>	to work happily

Note that:

- (i) The repeated adverb may take on a changed tone (with a low tone becoming a high rising one: see Units 3 and 9):

<b>jihng</b>	quiet	→	<b>jihng-jíng-déi</b>	quietly
--------------	-------	---	-----------------------	---------

- (ii) In adjectives with two syllables, each syllable is repeated separately:

<b>gáan-dāan</b>	simple	→	<b>gáan-gáan-dāan-dāan</b>	simply
<b>hīng-sūng</b>	relaxed	→	<b>hīng-hīng-sūng-sūng</b>	in a relaxed manner

All these forms of adverb come before the verb they modify:

**Léih jihng-jíng-déi yahp heui lā**  
 Go in quietly

**Kéuih tǎu-tǎu-déi jáu-jó**  
 He left secretly

**Kéuih gáan-gáan-dāan-dāan gám hingjók sāangyah**  
 She celebrated her birthday in a simple way

**Ngóhdeih hīng-hīng-sūng-sūng, gáan-gáan-dāan-dāan gám douh-ga**  
 We spend our holiday in a laid-back, simple style

Reduplicated adverbs, especially those of more than one syllable, can combine with **gám** as described in (ii) above:

**Kéuih sòh-só-déi gám siu**  
He smiles in a foolish way

**Léih syū-syū-fuhk-fuhk gám fan háidouh lā**  
Lie down here comfortably

**Kéuihdeih háidouh hīng-hīng-sūng-sūng gám tēng gō**  
They're relaxing listening to songs

### Exercise 10.1

Add the adverbial phrase provided to the following sentences:

- Kéuihdeih hàahng fāan ūkkéi**  
They walk home slowly (**màahn-máan**)
- Kéuih ganisuih jihgái**  
He introduces himself excitedly (**hóu hīngfáhn gám**)
- Kéuih mahn-jó yāt go mahntàih**  
He asked a question boldly (**hóu daaih-dáam gám**)
- Kéuih só-jó douh mùhn**  
She locked the door carefully (**hóu síusám gám**)
- Ngóh go jái waak-jó géi fūk wá**  
My son drew several pictures quickly (**hóu faai gám**)
- Kéuih hohk-gán Gwóngdūng-wá**  
He is studying Cantonese diligently (**hóu lóuhlihk gám**)
- Dī hohksāang tēng-gán yín-góng**  
The students are listening to the lecture attentively (**hóu làuhsām gám**)
- Dī Hēunggóng hohksāang yèhng-jó béichoi**  
The Hong Kong students won the competition comfortably (**hóu hīngsūng gám**)
- Yi-ngoih faatsāng-jó**  
The accident happened suddenly (**hóu dahtyihh gám**)
- Ngóh jūngyi hingjūk sāangyaht**  
I like to celebrate birthdays happily (**hóh-hóh-sām-sām gám**)

### Exercise 10.2

Use **dāk** to create adverbial phrases using the adjectives provided, repeating the verb where necessary (as in numbers 6–10):

Example: **Kéuih jáu *dāk* hóu faai** He runs quickly  
**Kéuih *jā-chē* *jā dāk* hóu msiusām** He drives carelessly

- |    |   |                         |
|----|---|-------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Léih sé _____ hóu hóu</b>              | You write well          |
| 2  | <b>Ga fēigēi fēi _____ hóu dāi</b>        | The plane flies low     |
| 3  | <b>Ngóhdeih fan _____ hóu syūfuhk</b>     | We sleep comfortably    |
| 4  | <b>Kéuihdeih wáan _____ hóu hōisām</b>    | They play happily       |
| 5  | <b>Kéuih tiu _____ hóu yúhn</b>           | She jumps a long way    |
| 6  | <b>Kéuih yíng-séung _____ hóu leng</b>    | She takes pictures well |
| 7  | <b>Ngóh yàuh-séui _____ hóu maahn</b>     | I swim slowly           |
| 8  | <b>Kéuih cheung-gó _____ hóu sai-sēng</b> | She sings softly        |
| 9  | <b>Ngóh jyú-fauhn _____ hóu faai</b>      | I cook quickly          |
| 10 | <b>Ngóh tiu-móuh _____ hóu chā</b>        | I dance badly           |

### Exercise 10.3

Fill in the gaps with a suitable manner adverbial with **-gám**:

- 1 **Ngóh (I) \_\_\_\_\_ sé nī fūng seun** (write this letter)
- 2 **Ngóhdeih (We) \_\_\_\_\_ tái boují** (read the newspaper)
- 3 **Kéuih (He) \_\_\_\_\_ fan hái chòhng seuhngmihn** (sleep on the bed)
- 4 **Kéuihdeih (They) \_\_\_\_\_ jáu-jó** (have left)
- 5 **Léih Síujé (Miss Lee) \_\_\_\_\_ daap ngóh go mahntàih** (answer my question)
- 6 **Lónhbáan (The boss) \_\_\_\_\_ sāan-jó douh mùhn** (closed the door)
- 7 **Yihp gausauh (Professor Yip) \_\_\_\_\_ góng syū** (give a lecture)
- 8 **Dī hohksāang (The students) \_\_\_\_\_ tēng syū** (listen to the lecture)
- 9 **Go bihbī (The baby) \_\_\_\_\_ wáan-gán** (playing)
- 10 **Kéuih (She) \_\_\_\_\_ haam-gán** (crying)



# UNIT ELEVEN

## Adverbs of time, frequency and duration

While the adverbs introduced in the previous unit describe the manner of action, those included in this unit are concerned with the way events take place in time.

### 1 Adverbs of time

Given that verbs do not indicate tense in Cantonese, adverbs are especially important in specifying when events take place:

**Kéuih yihgā juhng hái yīyún**

She's still in hospital (now)

**Kéuih gójahnsih juhng hái yīyún**

She was still in hospital (then)

**Ngóh jikhāak heui Yinggwok taam léih**

I'm going to visit you in England (right away)

**Ngóh daih-yih-sih heui Yinggwok taam léih**

I'll visit you in England (in the future)

In English the tense of the verb indicates when things take place, and the adverb can easily be omitted, while in Cantonese only the adverb indicates the time. Common adverbs include:

Present:	<b>yihgā</b>	now	<b>gāmyaht</b>	today
Recent past:	<b>tàuhshín</b>	just now	<b>ngāam-ngāam</b>	just
Past:	<b>yihchihh</b>	before	<b>búnlòih</b>	originally
	<b>seuhng chi</b>	last time	<b>gójahnsih</b>	then
	<b>kàhmyaht</b>	yesterday	<b>chihnyaht</b>	the day before yesterday

Future:	<b>jīkhāak</b>	right away	<b>daih yih sih, daih-sih</b>	in future
	<b>hah chi</b>	next time	<b>dousih</b>	when the time comes
	<b>tīngyaht</b>	tomorrow	<b>haohyaht</b>	the day after tomorrow

These adverbs may come:

(a) Before the verb:

<b>Ngóhdeih yìhā chēut heui</b>	We're going out now
<b>Kéuih ngāam-ngāam jáu-jó</b>	He just left

(b) Before the subject:

<b>Búnloh ngoh séung duhk yīfō</b>	Originally I wanted to study medicine
<b>Tāuhsin kéuih mgeidāk daai sósih</b>	Just now he forgot his keys

## 2 Adverbs of frequency and duration

Useful adverbs to describe the frequency of an action include:

<b>sèhngyaht</b>	always	<b>yāt chi</b>	once
<b>dōsou</b>	mostly	<b>léuhng chi</b>	twice
<b>yáuh(-jahn)-sih</b>	sometimes	<b>sāam chí</b>	three times
<b>yāt sih-sih/yāt sí-sih</b>	occasionally	<b>gái chi</b>	several times
<b>pihngsih</b>	normally	<b>tūngsèuhng</b>	usually

**múih** 'each' can be used to form adverbial phrases:

<b>múih go yaht</b>	every month	<b>múih go singkèih</b>	every week
---------------------	-------------	-------------------------	------------

Note that several common time expressions of one syllable do not take a classifier, and can form reduplicated adverbs:

<b>múih chi</b> or <b>chi-chi</b>	every time	(not * <b>múih go chi</b> )
<b>múih yaht</b> or <b>yaht-yaht</b>	every day	(not * <b>múih go yaht</b> )
<b>múih līh</b> or <b>līh-līh</b>	every year	(not * <b>múih go līh</b> )
<b>múih jiu</b> or <b>jiu-jiu</b>	every morning	(not * <b>múih go jiu</b> )
<b>múih máahn</b> or <b>máahn-máahn</b>	every evening	(not * <b>múih go máahn</b> )

All these adverbs generally come before the verb:

**Kéuih múih jiu luhk dím héi sán ge**  
(*lit.* he each morning six o'clock gets up)  
He gets up at six every morning

**Kéuih yaht-yaht sái-tàuh**  
(*lit.* she daily washes hair)  
She washes her hair every day

Note the order in phrases such as the following describing the frequency of actions:

<b>yāt lhn yāt chi</b>	once a year ( <i>lit.</i> one year one time)
<b>múih go yuht yāt chi</b>	once a month ( <i>lit.</i> each month one time)

Such phrases are often split up with the more general term coming before the verb and the more specific frequency expression after:

**Ngóhdeih yāt lhn heui yāt chi douh-gu**  
(*lit.* we one year go one time spend holiday)  
We go on holiday once a year

**Ngóhdeih lhn-lhn fāan heui yāt chi**  
(*lit.* we each year return go one time)  
We go back once a year

Adverbs of frequency may come after the verb and object:

<b>Ngóh heui-gwo Daaíhluhk yāt chi</b>	I've been to mainland China once
<b>Ngóh gin-gwo yisāng sām chi</b>	I've seen the doctor three times

Adverbs of both frequency and duration can be used in the following ways:

(i) Between the verb and the object:

<b>Ngóh heui-gwo yāt chi Daaíhluhk</b>	I've been to the mainland once
<b>Kéuih jyú-gwo géi chi faahn</b>	He's cooked dinner a few times
<b>Ngóh gāmyaht sái-gwo léuhng chi tàuh</b>	I've washed my hair twice today
<b>Ngóh gin-gwo sām chi yisāng</b>	I've seen the doctor three times
<b>Kéuih duhk-jó sām lhn Jūngmán</b>	He has studied Chinese for three years

<b>Ngóh diu-jó sèhng yaht yú</b>	I've been fishing for a whole day
<b>Ngóh tái-jó yāt go jūngtāuh syū</b>	I've read for an hour
<b>Kéuih sikh-jó yāt go yuht yeuk</b>	She has been on medication for a month

- (ii) After the verb and object, with repetition of the transitive verb as seen in Unit 10:

<b>Kéuih háau-sih háau-gwo géi chi</b>	She's taken the exam several times
<b>Kéuih jyú-faahn jyú-gwo géi chi</b>	He's cooked dinner a few times
<b>Ngóh duhk Jūngmán duhk-jó sāam lūn</b>	I've been studying Chinese for three years (or: I studied Chinese for three years)
<b>Kéuih jyuh yiyún jyuh-jó yāt go yuht</b>	She's been in hospital for a month (or: She stayed in hospital for a month)

As the translations suggest, this construction can refer either to a period of time leading up to the present, or to a completed period in the past (see Unit 18 on the aspect marker **-jó**).

### Exercise 11.1

Add a suitable adverb to the following, paying attention to the position of the adverb:

- Ngóh hái Tsimshatsui**  
I was in Tsimshatsui (yesterday)
- Kéuih dou-jó gēichēuhng**  
She arrived at the airport (just now)
- Ngóh gin-gwo kéuih**  
I've met him (before)
- Kéuihdeih jung-jó tàuh-jéung**  
They won the first prize (last time)
- Ngóhdeih juhng sai**  
We were still small (then)
- Ngóh jouh wuhsih ge**  
I used to be a nurse (originally)
- Ngóhdeih wán léih**  
We'll contact you (next time)

- 8 **Kéuih hóu lāu**  
He got angry (immediately)
- 9 **Ngóh chéng léih síhk-faahn**  
I'll treat you to a meal (in future)
- 10 **Ngóhdeih hái Méihgwok jyuh-gwo**  
We used to live in America (before)

### Exercise 11.2

Say how often you engage in the following activities (fictitiously where necessary):

- 1 play tennis (**dá móhngkàuh**)
- 2 go swimming (**heui yàuh-séui**)
- 3 watch television (**tái dihnshíh**)
- 4 read the newspaper (**tái boujǐ**)
- 5 wash your hair (**sái tàuh**)
- 6 have a haircut (**jín tàuhfaat**)
- 7 buy groceries (**máaih sung**)
- 8 go to a concert (**heui yām-ngohk-wúi**)
- 9 eat ice cream (**síhk syutgōu**)
- 10 visit relatives (**taam chānchīk**)

### Exercise 11.3

State how long you do the following every day:

- 1 play video games (**dá gēi**)
- 2 practise Cantonese (**lǐn Gwóngdūngwá**)
- 3 talk on the phone (**góng dihnwá**)
- 4 cooking (**jyú-faahn**)
- 5 listen to music (**tēng yām-ngohk**)
- 6 reading (**tái-syū**)
- 7 chat with friends (**kīng-gái**)
- 8 stay on the Internet (**séuhng móhng**)
- 9 take a shower (**chūng lèuhng**)
- 10 write in a diary (**sé yahtgei**)

### Exercise 11.4

Add an adverb of duration in the space provided. Note that the following

sentences involve reduplication of the verb.

- |    |   |                                       |
|----|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Kéuih hoi wái hoi-jó</b> _____                 | She has been in a meeting             |
| 2  | <b>Ngóhdeih sihk-faan sihk-jó</b> _____           | We have been having a meal            |
| 3  | <b>Kéuihdeih dá bō dá-jó</b> _____                | They have been playing a ball game    |
| 4  | <b>Ngóh sé seun sé-jó</b> _____                   | I have been writing letters           |
| 5  | <b>Kéuih góí gyún góí-jó</b> _____                | She has been marking papers           |
| 6  | <b>Lohk yú lohk-jó</b> _____                      | It's been raining                     |
| 7  | <b>Kéuih cheung-gō cheung-jó</b> _____            | He's been singing                     |
| 8  | <b>Dī hohksāang jouh gūngfo<br/>jouh-jó</b> _____ | The students have been doing homework |
| 9  | <b>Kéuihdeih aai-gāau aai-jó</b> _____            | They've been arguing                  |
| 10 | <b>Kéuih jā-chē jā-jó</b> _____                   | He's been driving                     |

# UNIT TWELVE

## Comparison: **gwo** and **dī**

In this unit we look at ways of making simple comparisons. In colloquial Cantonese there are two basic kinds of comparison:

- (i) Where two things are explicitly being compared, **gwo** is used to mean 'more (adjective) than (noun)'. The word order is similar to the English (and quite unlike that in Mandarin):

<b>Jenny sai gwo ngóh</b>	Jenny is younger than me
<b>Baat láu hóu gwo yih láu</b>	The eighth floor is better than the second floor
<b>Nī deui gwai gwo gó deui</b>	This pair is more expensive than that one

Note that **gwo** is also a verb meaning 'cross' or 'pass', so it is natural that it comes to mean 'surpass' in comparisons.

- (ii) If the object of comparison is not expressed (i.e. there is no 'than . . .'), **dī** is used instead:

<b>Jenny sai dī</b>	Jenny is younger
<b>Baat láu hóu dī</b>	The eighth floor is better
<b>Gó deui gwai dī</b>	That pair is more expensive

**dī** literally means 'a little' but here serves largely to indicate a difference between the two items with respect to some property.

### Modifying comparisons

Both kinds of comparison can be modified by adverbs of degree such as **hóu dō** 'much' and **síu-síu** 'a little', as follows:

- (i) In comparisons with **gwo**, the adverb of degree is simply added at the end of the construction:

<b>Léih lēk gwo kéuih hóu dô</b>	You're much smarter than him
<b>Kéuih gōn gwo léih síu-síu</b>	She's a little taller than you
<b>Ngóh daaih gwo kéuih yát lín</b>	I'm a year older than her

- (ii) In comparisons where **di** would normally be used, a degree word such as **hóu dô** 'a lot' replaces **di**:

<b>Ni go leng di</b>	→ <b>Ni go leng hóu dô</b>	This one is much nicer
<b>Ni go gwai di</b>	→ <b>Ni go gwai síu-síu</b>	This one is a little more expensive
<b>Ni go chúhng di</b>	→ <b>Ni go chúhng géi púih</b>	This one is several times heavier

The reason for this is that **di** literally means 'a bit', so that to combine it with an adverb like **hóu dô** 'a lot' would be a contradiction in terms. This shows that **di** as in **leng di** is not really equivalent to the suffix **-er** in English 'prettier', tempting though the equivalence may be.

**juhng** 'even' can be applied to both the **gwo** and **di** constructions, but comes *before* the adjective:

<b>Gām chí juhng hóu gwo seuhng chí</b>	This time is even better than last time
<b>Gám yéung juhng hóu (di)</b>	This way is even better

(**di** can be omitted here since the presence of **juhng** implies that a comparison is being made.)

## Alternative forms of comparison

An alternative to the **gwo** form of comparison uses **béi** 'compare'. The word order is quite different since **béi** and the object of comparison come *before* the adjective:

**Hahtín béi dūngtín chèuhng**  
(lit. summer compare winter long)  
Summer is longer than winter

**Héunggóng ge jándim béi Bākging dô**  
(lit. Hong Kong's hotels compare Beijing more)  
There are more hotels in Hong Kong than Beijing



A modifying phrase comes after the adjective, as with **gwo**:

**Kéuih béi ngóh sai yāt lhn**

(lit. she compare me young(er) one year)

She's a year younger than me

**Ngóh béi ngóh lóuhpòh daaih sām seui**

(lit. I compare my wife big three years)

I'm three years older than my wife

Being basically a feature of Mandarin and written Chinese, the comparison with **béi** is more formal than the **gwo** construction. Learners who know some Mandarin will be able to use the **béi** construction readily in Cantonese, while other beginners would do best to stick with the colloquial **gwo**. The **béi** form does allow some comparisons which would not be possible with **gwo**, such as those expressing a change of state:

**Kéuih béi gauh-lín sau-jó**

(lit. she compare last year got thinner)

She's got thinner since last year

**Léih béi seuhng chí jeunbòuh-jó**

(lit. you compared last time improved)

You've improved since last time

Yet another alternative is to omit **gwo** but add a phrase showing the degree of difference:

**Kéuih gōu yàhndeih yāt go tàuh**

(lit. he tall people one head)

He's a head taller than everyone else

**Ngóhdeih faai kéuih yāt bōuh**

(lit. we fast him one step)

We're a step ahead of him

This construction is commonly found with dimensional adjectives such as **daaih** and **sai**, which are often used in this way to mean 'older' and 'younger' respectively:

**Léih gòhgō daaih léih géi dō a?**

(lit. your brother big you how much?)

How much older is your brother than you?

**Kéuih sai ngóh yāt lîhn**

(lit. she small me one year)

She's a year younger than me

## Comparison of adverbs

This involves combining the syntax of adverbs (Unit 10) with that of comparison; it thus comes for free in the sense that nothing new has to be learnt. Comparisons using **gwo**, **dī** or **béi** are added to adverbial constructions with **dāk**:

**Kéuih tái dāk faai gwo ngóh**

(lit. he read manner quick than me)

He reads faster than I do

**Léih sé dāk leng dī**

(lit. you write manner nicer)

You write better

**Kéuihdeih béi ngóhdeih jouh dāk hóu**

(lit. they compare us do manner well)

They do it better than we do

The main difficulty arises where the verb has an object and both are repeated (Unit 10):

**Kéuih tái Jūngmán tái dāk faai gwo ngóh**

(lit. he reads Chinese reads manner quick than me)

He reads Chinese more quickly than I do

**Léih sé jîh sé dāk leng dī**

(lit. you write characters write manner nicer)

You write characters better

**Kéuihdeih jouh sāngyi béi ngóhdeih jouh dāk hóu**

(lit. they do business compare us do manner well)

They do business better than we do

## Superlatives

Superlatives are expressed straightforwardly by **jeui**, or as a colloquial alternative by **jí**:

<b>jeui leng</b>	most beautiful	<b>ji lèk</b>	the smartest
<b>jeui fōngbihn</b>	most convenient	<b>ji pèhng</b>	the cheapest
<b>jeui hīngfáhn</b>	most excited	<b>ji jeng</b>	the best, coolest (slang)

These forms are typically used as follows:

(i) Attributively, with **ge**:

<b>jeui fōngbihn ge jōuhfaat</b>	the most convenient method
<b>jeui gányiú ge siusik</b>	the most important news
<b>ji pèhng ge gēipiu</b>	the cheapest air tickets

(ii) Predicatively, with **haih**:

<b>Gám yéuhng jeui fōngbihn</b>	This way is the most convenient
<b>Ni júng ji dái máaih</b>	This kind is the best value

The order is often reversed beginning with the superlative expression as the subject:

**Jeui fōngbihn haih nī go deihdím**  
*(lit. most convenient is this location)*  
 This location is most convenient

**Ji pèhng haih nī jek pàaihji**  
*(lit. most cheap is this brand)*  
 This brand is the cheapest

A point to note here is that the range in which the comparison is to be made is specified *before* the superlative form:

**Hēunggóng jeui chēutméng ge gōsáu**  
*(lit. Hong Kong most famous singer)*  
 The most famous singer in Hong Kong

**Chyùhn gwok jeui daaih ge ngànnhòhng**  
*(lit. whole country most big bank)*  
 The biggest bank in the whole country

**Gam dô jáulàuh jeui hóu-sihk haih nī gān**  
*(lit. so many restaurants most good-to-eat is this one)*  
 This is the best of all the restaurants to eat at

This ordering illustrates a general tendency in Cantonese to put the more general, inclusive term before the more specific one.

### Exercise 12.1

Decide whether the following comparisons would use **gwo** or **di**, and translate as much of the sentence as you can into Cantonese:

- 1 It's warmer today
- 2 She's happier now
- 3 My friend is older than me
- 4 She's much taller than before
- 5 It's slower this time
- 6 This restaurant is cheaper than that one
- 7 I like dancing more than singing
- 8 Your idea is better

### Exercise 12.2

Make any meaningful comparison between the following:

- 1 Today (**gāmyaht**) and yesterday (**kàhmyaht**)
- 2 Girls (**léuihjái**) and boys (**làahmjái**)
- 3 Shirts (**sěutsāam**) and ties (**léngtāai**)
- 4 Toronto (**Dòlèuhndō**) and London (**Lèuhndēun**)
- 5 Chinese (**Jūngmán**) and English (**Yingmán**)
- 6 Swimming (**yàuh-séui**) and jogging (**páau-bouh**)
- 7 Cantonese food (**Gwóngdūng chò**) and Chiu Chow food (**Chìuhjāu chò**)
- 8 Doing business (**jouh sāangyi**) and teaching (**gaau-syū**)

### Exercise 12.3

Make the following comparisons more explicit using the adverb given in brackets:

- 1 **Gām-lín dung gwo gauh-lín**  
This year is (much) colder than last year
- 2 **Gāmyaht lyúhn di**  
It's (much) warmer today

- 3 **Léih dī tàuhfaat yìhgā dyún dī**  
Your hair is (a little) shorter now
- 4 **Hēunggóng gwai gwo nūdouh**  
Hong Kong is (several times) more expensive than here
- 5 **Ngóh guih gwo kéuih**  
I'm (even) more tired than she is
- 6 **Sìhk faahn pèhng gwo sìhk mihn**  
Eating rice is (even) cheaper than eating noodles
- 7 **Gām chí hohkfai bēi seuhng chí gwai**  
This time the tuition is (a hundred dollars) more expensive than last time
- 8 **Kéuih gōu gwo ngóh**  
She is (three inches) taller than me

### † Exercise 12.4

A Express the following comparisons colloquially with **gwo**:

Example: **Fóchē bēi bāsi faai** → **Fóchē faai gwo bāsi**  
The train is faster than the bus

- 1 **Hóiy-yú bēi yéuhng-yú gwai**  
Wild fish are more expensive than farmed fish
- 2 **Hēungpín bēi hùhng chàh hēung**  
Jasmine tea is more fragrant than black tea
- 3 **Làahnfā bēi gūkfā leng**  
Orchids are prettier than chrysanthemums
- 4 **Go léui bēi go jái daaih léuhng sei**  
The daughter is two years older than the son
- 5 **Nī bāan hohksāang bēi gó bāan kàhnlihk**  
This class is more hard-working than that one

B Express the following comparisons with **bēi**:

- 1 **Gauh hàaih syūfuhk gwo sán hàaih**  
Old shoes are more comfortable than new ones
- 2 **Yìhgā heui Oujāu yùhngyih gwo yìhchihh**  
Going to Australia now is easier than before
- 3 **Gūngsī gām-lín jaahn dāk dō gwo gauh-lín**  
The company has earned more this year than last year
- 4 **Nī bún síusyut hóu-tái gwo daaih yāt bún**  
This novel is better than the first one
- 5 **Léih gām chí jōuh dāk hóu gwo seuhng chí**  
This time you're doing better than last time

# UNIT THIRTEEN

## Prepositions: space and time

Three important classes of words are involved in the expression of location. We shall introduce these before showing how they are used in combination.

### 1 Prepositions

<b>hái</b>	at/in/on (also <b>héung</b> )	<b>yàuh</b>	(starting) from
<b>heung</b>	towards	<b>lèih</b>	(away) from
<b>tùhng</b>	with	<b>gīng</b>	(passing) via

Some of these items are also known as coverbs, since they have certain characteristics of verbs (see *Intermediate Cantonese*).

### 2 Demonstrative terms, based on **nī** 'this' and **gó** 'that'

<b>nīdouh</b>	here (also <b>nīsyu</b> )	<b>gódouh</b>	there (also <b>gósyu</b> )
<b>nībihn</b>	over here, this way	<b>góbihn</b>	over there, that way
<b>nītàuh</b>	around here (in this area)	<b>gótàuh</b>	around there (in that area)

### 3 Localizers or postpositions indicating spatial relationships

<b>seuhngbihn</b>	on top of	<b>hahbihn</b>	below
<b>chìhnbihn</b>	in front of	<b>hauhbìhn</b>	behind
<b>yahpbihn</b>	inside	<b>chēutbihn</b>	outside
<b>léuihmihn</b>	inside, within	<b>ngoihbihn</b>	outside
<b>deuimihn</b>	opposite	<b>jākbihn</b>	beside
<b>jūnggāan</b>	in the middle of	<b>jīgāan</b>	between

Note how these characteristically end in **bihn** or **mihn** meaning 'side' (the two forms being interchangeable in most cases).

## Location

Using the words introduced above, several characteristic patterns are used to indicate location in space:

- (i) **hái** followed by names of places:

<b>Dī sailouhjái hái gódouh</b>	The children are over there
<b>Kéuihdeih lēi mǎaih hái nīsyu</b>	They are hiding here
<b>Ngóh gāmyaht sèhng yaht hái ŭkkéi</b>	I was at home all day today
<b>Kéuih hái Méihgwok duk-syū</b>	She studies in America
<b>Ngóhdeih hái hohkhaauh hōi-wúí</b>	We're having a meeting at school
<b>Kéuih yìhā m̃h hái gūngsī</b>	She is not at the office at the moment

Note that the word **háidouh** 'to be here' is generally used instead of **hái nīdouh** when presence or absence is at issue. For example, on the telephone:

<b>Léih sāang m̃h háidouh</b>	Mr Lee is not here
(not * <b>Léih sāang m̃h hái nīdouh</b> )	

**háidouh** is also used to express action in progress (progressive aspect: Unit 19).

- (ii) **hái** together with a localizer:

<b>Yisāng hái seuhngbihn</b>	The doctor is upstairs
<b>Heiyún hái deuimihn</b>	The cinema is just opposite (across the street)
<b>Gíngchaat hái yahpbihn</b>	The police are inside

A noun phrase can come between **hái** and the localizer, in the pattern **hái ( . . . ) X-mihn/bihn**:

**Bún syū hái jēung tóí seuhngbihn**  
(lit. the book on the table top)  
The book is on the table

**Kéuih kéih hái pò syuh hauhmihn**  
*(lit. she stood at the tree behind)*  
 She stood behind the tree

**Ngóh jyuh hái kéuih ũkkéi deuimihn**  
*(lit. I live at her home opposite)*  
 I live opposite her (home)

**douh** 'there' serves colloquially as a localizer in this pattern:

**A-Mā hái tēng douh** Mum's in the living room  
**Dī séung hái ngóh douh** The pictures are with me/at my place

While this pattern with two separate expressions of location may appear redundant, note that **douh** (or another localizer in its place) is required here:

**Kéuihdeih hái ga chē douh** They're in the car  
 (not \* **Kéuihdeih hái ga che**)  
**Dī jīlín hái dihnlóuh douh** The data are in the computer  
 (not \* **Dī jīlín hái dihnlóuh**)

With **jīgān** 'between', **tùhng** is used to join the two noun phrases concerned, in the pattern **X tùhng Y jīgān**:

**Ngóh tùhng kéuih jīgān móuh saai gámchihng**  
*(lit. I and him between haven't all feeling)*  
 There's no feeling left between us

**Chihnggám tùhng léihji jīgān hóu làahn syúnjaahk**  
*(lit. emotion and rationality between very hard to choose)*  
 It's difficult to choose between emotion and rationality

- (iii) A demonstrative form or localizer followed by the existential **yáuh** (or its negative counterpart **móuh**: Unit 6) or another verb:

**Nídouh yáuh hóu dōsailouhjái** There're many children here  
**Gódouh móuh yáuh-wihng-chìh** There's no swimming pool there  
**Yahpbihn yáuh hóu dō yéh** There are lots of things inside  
**Hahbihn móuh chāantēng** Downstairs there's no restaurant  
**Chéutbihn lohk-gán yuh** It's raining outside

Again a noun phrase can be added before the localizer:



**Daaìhhoìk léuihmihñ yáuh sām go tòuh-syū-gwún**  
There are three libraries in the university

**Gāan fóng jūnggāan yáuh go gongkàhm**  
There's a piano in the middle of the room

## Movement and direction

Movement towards a point in space may be expressed by **heung**:

**Léih yīnggōi heung nībihñ hàahng**      You should walk this way  
(or **Léih yīnggōi hàahng nībihñ**)  
**Mhóu heung góbihñ mohng**                  Don't look in that direction  
(or **Mhóu mohng góbihñ**)

To express a starting point in time or space, **yàuh** is used as follows:

**Ngóh gāmyaht yàuh baat dím hōichí séuhng-tòhng**  
(*lit.* I today from eight o'clock beginning attended lessons)  
Today I had classes from eight o'clock onwards

**Yàuh Tòihwāan làih Hēunggóng yiu yāt go jūngtāuh fēigēi**  
(*lit.* from Taiwan coming to Hong Kong needs one hour's plane)  
It's an hour's flight from Taiwan to Hong Kong

**Yàuh nīdōuh heui Syutlèih géi yúhñ a?**  
(*lit.* from here go to Sydney how far)  
How far is it from here to Sydney?

Note that the prepositional phrase comes before the verb.

**yàuh** is also used together with **dou** indicating the end point of a journey in time or space:

**Ngóhdeih yàuh gām jīu dāng dou yìhngā**  
We've been waiting from this morning till now

**Yàuh daaihhoìk dou ūkkéi yiu bun go jūng**  
It takes half an hour to get from the university to home

**Kéuih yàuh sai dou daaih dōu haih gám ge**  
He's always been like this (*lit.* from small to big)

**gīng** 'via' introduces an intermediate step between the starting point and end point:

**Ngóhdeih gīng Dūnggīng heui Sāam Fàahn Sīh**

(lit. we pass Tokyo go to San Francisco)

We're going to San Francisco via Tokyo

**Léih hóiyh yàuh Hēunggóng dóu gīng seuihdouh dou ūkkéi**

(lit. you can from Hong Kong island pass the tunnel arrive home)

You can go home from Hong Kong island via the tunnel

Reflecting the intermediate step in a journey, the phrase with **gīng** 'via' typically comes in the middle of the sentence, before the destination.

**lèih** is used to indicate distance from a location:

**Yīyún lèih nīdouh géi yúhn a?**

(lit. hospital from here how far)

How far is the hospital from here?

**Ngóh ūkkéi lèih géichèuhng yihshap fānjūng**

(lit. my home from the airport twenty minutes)

My home is twenty minutes from the airport

Note that a verb is not needed here.

### Exercise 13.1

Express the location for each of the following using **hái** and a localizer in the spaces:

Example: **Dī fā hái fājēun yahpbihn** The flowers are inside the vase

- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| 1  | <b>Hohksāang</b> _____ <b>fóng</b> _____     | The students are inside the room       |
| 2  | <b>Jek mǎau</b> _____ <b>tóí</b> _____       | The cat is on the table                |
| 3  | <b>Go jámtàuh</b> _____ <b>chòhng</b> _____  | The pillow is on the bed               |
| 4  | <b>Jī bāt</b> _____ <b>háp</b> _____         | The pen is inside the box              |
| 5  | <b>Bún syū</b> _____ <b>dang</b> _____       | The book is under the chair            |
| 6  | <b>Go jūng</b> _____ <b>chèuhng</b> _____    | The clock is on the wall               |
| 7  | <b>Bá jē</b> _____ <b>mùhn</b> _____         | The umbrella is behind the door        |
| 8  | <b>Dī séung</b> _____ <b>séungbóu</b> _____  | The photos are inside the photo album  |
| 9  | <b>Pō syuh</b> _____ <b>gāan ūk</b> _____    | The tree is in front of the house      |
| 10 | <b>Dībnsihgēi</b> _____ <b>syūgwai</b> _____ | The television is beside the book-case |

### Exercise 13.2

Express the following in Cantonese:

- 1 behind the wall (**chèuhng**)
- 2 on top of the bookcase (**syügwaih**)
- 3 opposite the bank (**ngàhnhòhng**)
- 4 in the middle of the road (**máhlouh**)
- 5 between the park (**gūngyún**) and the petrol station (**yàuh jaahm**)
- 6 sitting (**chóh**) beside you
- 7 inside the box (**háp**)
- 8 outside the classroom (**hàanfóng**)
- 9 in front of the mirror (**geng**)
- 10 below the table (**tóí**)
- 11 towards this direction (**tóngheung**)
- 12 from morning (**jūu**) to evening (**máahn**)

### Exercise 13.3

Say what there is at the following locations in your home:

- 1 On the table: **tóí seuhngmihn** \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 On the wall: **chèuhng seuhngmihn** \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 In the kitchen: **chyùhfóng yahpbihn** \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Inside the living room: **haak-tèng léuimihn** \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 In the closet: **yígwaih yahpbihn** \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 Under the bed: **chòhng hahmihn** \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 Under the chair: **dang hahbihn** \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 On the bookcase: **syügwaih seuhngmihn** \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 In the bathroom: **sáisáu-gaan yahpbihn** \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 In the study: **syüfóng yahpbihn** \_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise 13.4

Describe the following journeys:

Example: from home to school: **yàuh ükkéi heui hohkhauh**

- 1 from here to the hospital (**yíyún**)
- 2 from the library (**tòuh-syü-gwún**) to the canteen (**faahn-tòhng**)
- 3 from the ground floor (**deih-há**) to the eighth floor (**baat láu**)
- 4 towards Kowloon (**Gáulòhng**)

- 
- 5 to Tokyo (**Dúnggīng**) via Taipei (**Tòihbāk**)
  - 6 from Hong Kong to London (**Lèuhndēun**) via Bangkok (**Maahn-gūk**)
  - 7 from the study (**syūfóng**) to the kitchen (**chyühfóng**)
  - 8 from the first time (**daih yāt chí**) until now (**yihgā**)
  - 9 from the airport (**gēichèuhng**) to home (**ūkkéi**)
  - 10 from the beginning (**tàuh**) to the end (**méih**)

# UNIT FOURTEEN

## Negation

To express negation, Cantonese uses negative words that all begin with the nasal consonant **m** and have low-register tones:

negative word	used with:
<b>m̀h</b> not	adjectives, verbs referring to the present
<b>móuh</b> have not	nouns, verbs referring to the past
<b>meih</b> not yet	verbs
<b>mhuìh</b> is not	sentences
<b>m-</b> un-	antonyms of adjectives and verbs

**m̀h** is used to negate:

(i) Most adjectives:

<b>Ní gihn sāam m̀h pèhng ga</b>	This shirt is not cheap
<b>Dí jìh m̀h chingchó</b>	The writing is not clear
<b>Ngóh gīngyihm m̀h gau</b>	My experience is not sufficient (lit. enough)

(ii) Verbs referring to the present:

<b>Ngóh gāmyaht m̀h fāan-hohk</b>	I'm not going to school today
<b>Kéuihdeih m̀h sāu yihn-gām</b>	They do not accept cash
<b>Gūngsī jaahmsih m̀h chéng yàhn</b>	The company is not hiring anyone right now

**móuh** is the negative form of **yáuh** (Unit 6), used in two main ways:

(i) As a main verb:

<b>Kéuih móuh làahm-pàhngyáuh ge</b>	She doesn't have a boyfriend
--------------------------------------	------------------------------

<b>Ngóhdeih yìh gā móuh gūngyàhn</b>	We don't have a (domestic) helper now
<b>Ngóh móuh leng sām jeuk</b>	I have no nice clothes to wear

(ii) As an auxiliary verb:

<b>Ngóh gāmyaht móuh gin dóu kéuih a</b>	I haven't seen her today
<b>Kéuih móuh làih hoi-wú</b>	He didn't come to the meeting
<b>Kéuihdeih móuh tungjī ngóhdeih</b>	They didn't inform us

**móuh** used in this way serves as the negative counterpart to **jó** (Unit 18), as can be seen in pairs like the following:

a	<b>Ngóh kàhmyaht máaih-jó choi</b>	I bought vegetables yesterday
b	<b>Ngóh kàhmyaht móuh máaih choi</b>	I didn't buy (any) vegetables yesterday
a	<b>Gūngsī chéng-jó kéuih</b>	The company has hired him
b	<b>Gūngsī móuh chéng kéuih</b>	The company has not hired him

**meih** as an auxiliary has the specific meaning 'not yet':

<b>Ngóhdeih juhng meih bün ūk</b>	We haven't moved house yet
<b>Lóuhbáan meih fān làih</b>	The boss hasn't come in yet
<b>Jaahmsih meih yáuh sūsik</b>	So far there hasn't been any news

Attached to the end of a statement, **meih** makes a special form of question, typically with **jó** or **gwo** (see Unit 18):

**Léih jouh-jó gūngfo meih a?**  
Have you done your homework (yet)?

**Léih heui-gwo Hóiyèuhng Gūngyún meih a?**  
Have you ever been to Ocean Park?

**mhaih** 'it's not' is the negative form of the verb **haih** 'to be'. It is used in negating adjectives modified by an adverb (see Unit 9):

<b>mhaih hóu leng</b>	not very pretty
<b>mhaih géi gūngpìhng</b>	not quite fair
<b>Ngóhdeih mhaih gam suhk</b>	We're not that familiar (with each other)

## Antonyms formed with negation

Antonyms of many adjectives (and some verbs) can be formed by adding a prefix **m-**:

<b>hōisām</b>	happy	→	<b>mhōisām</b>	unhappy
<b>chūngchó</b>	clear	→	<b>mchūngchó</b>	unclear
<b>gūngpìhng</b>	fair	→	<b>mgūngpìhng</b>	unfair
<b>tùhngyi</b>	agree	→	<b>mtùhngyi</b>	disagree

Some of these negative forms carry a meaning related to that of the underlying verb or adjective, but not simply its opposite:

<b>gin</b>	see	→	<b>mgin</b>	lose
<b>geidāk</b>	remember	→	<b>mgeidāk</b>	forget
<b>tùhng</b>	same	→	<b>mtùhng</b>	different
<b>dākhàahn</b>	at leisure	→	<b>mdākhàahn</b>	busy
<b>syūfuhk</b>	comfortable	→	<b>msyūfuhk</b>	unwell, sick

All such antonyms can be modified by **hóu** or other adverbs:

**Kéuih hóu mjūngyi léih ge táihyih**

She really dislikes your proposal

**Gám yéung deui ngóh taai mgūngpìhng**

(lit. this way towards me too unfair)

This is too unfair to me

A few such words exist in the negative form, i.e. they are inherently negative; without the prefix **m-**, they do not occur in an affirmative statement:

<b>mhóuyisi</b>	embarrassed
<b>mfahnhei</b>	discontented
<b>Kéuih gokdāk hóu mhóuyisi</b>	She feels very embarrassed
(but not * <b>Kéuih gokdāk hóu hóuyisi</b> )	
<b>Ngóh gokdāk hóu mfahnhei</b>	I feel very discontented
(but not * <b>Ngóh gokdāk hóu fahnhei</b> )	

## Double negatives

Combinations of two negative forms are widely used to give a qualified or indirect positive meaning. A typical case is to use **mhaih** to deny a negative statement:

<b>Ngóh mhaih m̄h seun léih</b>	It's not that I don't believe you
<b>Mhaih m̄hóláhg ge</b>	It's not impossible
<b>Ngóhdeih mhaih móuh h̄imohng</b>	We're not without hope (i.e. we still have a chance)

Another case involves negating both the main verb and an auxiliary (see Unit 20):

<b>Kéuih m̄h wóih m̄h fāan làih</b>	He won't fail to come back
<b>Gám yéung m̄h wúih m̄gūngp̄ihng</b>	That would not be unfair
<b>Léih m̄h hóyh m̄h b̄i ch̄n</b>	You cannot choose not to pay (i.e. you have to pay)

## Exercise 14.1

Put these statements in the negative by using **móuh** or **mhaih**:

- Kéuih ūkkéi yáuh mahntàih**  
His family has problems
- Ngóhdeih hóu guih**  
We're very tired
- Ngóh sīng-jó-jik**  
I got promoted
- Kéuih gihn sām hóu gwai**  
Her dress is very expensive
- Ngóh tauhsin sihk-jó yeuhk**  
I have taken the medicine just now
- Yisāng heui-jó douh-ga**  
The doctor has gone on holiday
- Lóuhbáan hóu lāu**  
The boss is very angry
- Dī hohksāang yáuh séuhng-móhng**  
The students have got on the Internet
- Dī hohksāang hóu kàhnlihk**  
The students are very diligent
- Gó tou hei tai ch̄euhug**  
That film is too long



## Exercise 14.2

Show your disagreement with the following negative statements by providing the affirmative counterparts:

Example: **Léih móuh sìhgaan** You have no time → **Ngóh yáuh sìhgaan (a)** I do have time (the particle **a** serves to soften the force of the disagreement, see Unit 25)

- 1 **Sìhk hóisín mih gwai**  
Eating seafood is not expensive
- 2 **Wòhng Sāang mih chéng kéuih**  
Mr Wong is not hiring her
- 3 **Léih móuh duhk-gwo Faatmán**  
You haven't studied French
- 4 **Kéuihdeih meih git-fán**  
They're not married
- 5 **Léih móuh hou-méng**  
You haven't applied
- 6 **Dí háausih tàihmuhk mhaih hóu làahn**  
The exam questions are not very hard
- 7 **Gāan fóng mih gōnjehng**  
The room is not tidy
- 8 **Kéuih yihgá mdákhàahn**  
He's busy now
- 9 **Gāmyaht móuh tòhng**  
There are no lessons today
- 10 **Ngóhdeih meih sìhk-gwo sèh-gāng**  
We've never eaten snake soup

## Exercise 14.3

Create antonyms based on the following adjectives and verbs, translate and pronounce them:

- |                    |         |                     |            |
|--------------------|---------|---------------------|------------|
| 1 <b>sānsīn</b>    | fresh   | 6 <b>jūngyi</b>     | like       |
| 2 <b>síusām</b>    | careful | 7 <b>mìhngbuahk</b> | understand |
| 3 <b>hóuchóí</b>   | lucky   | 8 <b>tùhngyi</b>    | agree      |
| 4 <b>gōuhing</b>   | glad    | 9 <b>yǎnséung</b>   | appreciate |
| 5 <b>gihnghōng</b> | healthy | 10 <b>làuhsām</b>   | attentive  |

## † Exercise 14.4

A Create a double negative based on the sentence provided:

Example: **Ngóh m̃h séung heui** I don't want to go → **Ngóh m̃hah m̃h séung heui**

- |  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1 <b>Kéuih m̃oh seunsām</b>              | She lacks confidence         |
| 2 <b>Kéuih góng ge yeh m̃oh douhléih</b> | What he says is unreasonable |
| 3 <b>Léih gājē m̃h wúih bōng léih</b>    | Your sister won't help you   |
| 4 <b>Ngóhdeih m̃h gau chín</b>           | We don't have enough money   |
| 5 <b>Léih gāmyaht m̃dākhàahn</b>         | You're busy today            |

B Use a double negative to express the following indirectly:

Example: **Léih yātdihng yiu seun kéuih** You must believe him →  
**Léih m̃h hóyih m̃h seun kéuih**

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1 <b>Ngóhdeih tùhngyi</b>         | We agree                                 |
| 2 <b>Ngóhdeih yiu jáu</b>         | We must leave                            |
| 3 <b>Gūngsī háng gā yàhn-gūng</b> | The company is willing to raise salaries |
| 4 <b>Ngóh wúih geidāk</b>         | I'll remember                            |
| 5 <b>Léih máaih dāk héi</b>       | You can afford it                        |

# UNIT FIFTEEN

## Verbs of motion: **heui** and **laih**

The verbs **heui** 'go' and **laih** (or **lèih**) 'come' are used as follows:

(i) By themselves as main verbs:

<b>Ngóhdeih yāтчàih heui lā</b>	Let's go together
<b>Kéuih fīngyaht mēh lāih la</b>	She's not coming tomorrow

Both can be followed directly by a place name or other expression of the destination, without a preposition as in English:

<b>Ngóh yāt-yuht heui Méihgwok</b>	I'm going to America in January
<b>Ngóhdeih yīhgā heui fóchējaahm</b>	We're going to the railway station now
<b>Kéuihdeih mēh lāih Yinggwok</b>	They're not coming to England
<b>Léih géisīh lāih ngóh ūkkéi a?</b>	When are you coming to my place?

They can also take a verb phrase to show the purpose of the journey:

<b>heui (gwóng-chèuhng) yám-chāh</b>	Go (to the shopping centre) for dim sum ( <i>lit.</i> to drink tea)
<b>lāih (nīdouh) tái hei</b>	Come (here) to see a film

(ii) Together with directional verbs:

<b>yāhp heui</b>	go in	<b>yāhp lāih</b>	come in
<b>chēut heui</b>	go out	<b>chēut lāih</b>	come out
<b>séuhng heui</b>	go up	<b>séuhng lāih</b>	come up
<b>lohk heui</b>	go down	<b>lohk lāih</b>	come down
<b>gwo heui</b>	go over	<b>gwo lāih</b>	come over
<b>fāan heui</b>	go back	<b>fāan lāih</b>	come back

These combinations are used in the same way as the simple verbs, for example:

**Ngóh séuhng heui Bākging hoi-wái**  
(lit. I ascend go Beijing hold meeting)  
I'm going up to Beijing for a meeting

**Ngóhdeih lohk heui sihk-faahn lā**  
(lit. we descend go eat rice)  
Let's go down and eat

**Léih géisih gwo làih taam ngóh a?**  
(lit. you when over come visit me)  
When are you coming over to visit me?

A third verb may be added before the directional verb to express the manner of movement, resulting in a sequence of three verbs: (manner – direction – come/go):

<b>fēi yahp làih</b>	fly in	<b>fēi chēut heui</b>	fly out
<b>dit lohk làih</b>	come falling down	<b>dit lohk heui</b>	go falling down
<b>tiu séuhng làih</b>	jump up (here)	<b>tiu séuhng heui</b>	jump up (there)
<b>hàahng fāan làih</b>	walk back (here)	<b>hàahng gwo heui</b>	walk over (there)

When used with a transitive verb, the directional verb and **heui/làih** follow the object:

**Ngóhdeih séung daai dī sán tùhngsih yahp làih**  
(lit. we wish to bring some new colleagues in come)  
We'd like to bring in some new colleagues

**Ngóh líng dī hàhngléih séuhng làih sīn**  
(lit. I carry the luggage up come first)  
I'll bring the luggage up first

**Mgòl léih daih dī sung gwo làih**  
(lit. please you pass the food over come)  
Could you pass the dishes over, please

Aspect markers like **jó** and **gán** (Units 18–19) appear after the first verb of the sequence:

<b>Kéuihdeih chéut-jó heui hóu loih la</b>	They've been out for a long time
<b>Lóuhbáan fāan-gán làih ge la</b>	The boss is on his way ( <i>lit.</i> coming) back
<b>Jek jeukjái fēi-jó yahp làih chühfóng</b>	The bird has flown into the kitchen
<b>Dī séui làuh-gán lohk heui hahmih</b>	The water is flowing downwards

These sequences of verbs are known as serial verb constructions. One such pattern, using both **laih** and **heui**, uses four verbs in a row:

<b>hàahng làih hàahng heui</b>	walk to and fro
<b>fēi làih fēi heui</b>	fly back and forth
<b>lám làih lám heui</b>	think it over and over
<b>sí làih sí heui</b>	try and try again

Directional verbs are also used as verbs in their own right, with a place expression as their object. This pattern includes a number of useful set phrases:

<b>séuhng/lohk ché</b>	get on/off a car, bus, etc.
<b>séuhng/lohk sàan</b>	go up/down a hill
<b>yahp/chéut gíng</b>	enter/leave a country (at the border)
<b>yahp/chéut yún</b>	enter/leave hospital
<b>gwo máhlouh</b>	cross the road
<b>gwo hói</b>	cross the sea, harbour, etc.
<b>fān úkkéi</b>	return home
<b>fān gūng</b>	go ( <i>lit.</i> return) to work

## Exercise 15.1

Expand the sentence given by adding a directional verb:

Example: **heui Hēunggóng** go to Hong Kong → **gwo heui Hēunggóng**  
go over to Hong Kong/**fān heui Hēunggóng** go back to Hong Kong

- |                             |                      |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 <b>Làih ngóh úkkéi</b>    | come to my place     |
| 2 <b>Heui hohkhaauh</b>     | go to school         |
| 3 <b>Heui làuhseuhng</b>    | go upstairs          |
| 4 <b>Làih Yīnggwok</b>      | come to England      |
| 5 <b>Heui séjhlàuh</b>      | go to the office     |
| 6 <b>Làih tái-háh</b>       | come and take a look |
| 7 <b>Làih taam ngóhdeih</b> | come to visit us     |
| 8 <b>Heui hoi-wúi</b>       | go to a meeting      |

- |    |                 |              |
|----|-----------------|--------------|
| 9  | Làih sihk-faahn | come and eat |
| 10 | Heui jowh-yéh   | go to work   |

## Exercise 15.2

Add a suitable object to the verb sequences given to show the destination:

- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 1  | Ngóh tingyaht heui _____                    | I'm going tomorrow   |
| 2  | Léih làih _____ sihk-faahn                  | Come to eat  |
| 3  | Ngóh gwo heui _____ wán yàhn                | I'm going over to look for someone                             |
| 4  | Léih dákhaahn séuhng làih _____<br>chóh     | Come up for a visit ( <i>lit. to sit</i> )<br>when you're free |
| 5  | Ngóhdeih yiu fēi fāan heui _____            | We have to fly back  |
| 6  | Go léuihjáí jáu chēut heui _____            | The girl ran out   |
| 7  | Ngóh dī chānchik fāan làih _____<br>dauh-ga | My relatives are coming back for a<br>holiday                  |
| 8  | Léih hóiyih lohk heui _____<br>máaih yéh    | You can go down to do some<br>shopping                         |
| 9  | Ngóh jikhaak yahp heui _____<br>wuhn sām    | I'm going in to change right away                              |
| 10 | Ngóh tùhngsih gwo làih _____<br>king-gái    | My colleague is coming over to<br>chat                         |

## Exercise 15.3

Fill in the blanks according to the translation:

- |    |                          |  |
|----|--------------------------|--|
| 1  | _____ Gáulühng           | Go over to Kowloon                                   |
| 2  | _____ ngóh gān fóng      | Come into my room                                    |
| 3  | _____ Hēunggóng          | Come down to Hong Kong (e.g.<br>from mainland China) |
| 4  | _____ Bākging            | Go up to Beijing                                     |
| 5  | _____ haak-tēng          | Go out to the living room                            |
| 6  | _____ ūkkéi              | Come back home                                       |
| 7  | Yàuh sahph láu dīt _____ | Fall down from the tenth floor                       |
| 8  | Tiu _____ ga fóchē       | Jump onto the train                                  |
| 9  | Hàahng _____ syūfóng     | Walk into the study                                  |
| 10 | Fēi _____ Oujāu          | Fly back to Australia                                |

## † Exercise 15.4

Add an aspect marker (**jó** or **gán**; see Units 18–19) in the appropriate place according to the English translation:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 <b>Ga fochē fāan làih</b>                     | The lorry is coming back                        |
| 2 <b>Dī seun gei heui Méihgwok</b>              | The letters have been sent to the United States |
| 3 <b>Dī gúpiu sīng séuhng heui gōu wái</b>      | The shares have risen to a high                 |
| 4 <b>Kéuih hái fóng hàahng chēut làih</b>       | He's coming out of his room                     |
| 5 <b>Kéuihdeih pàh séuhng làih sǎandéng</b>     | They're climbing up the top of the mountain     |
| 6 <b>Bún syū dīt lohk heui deihhá</b>           | The book has fallen down onto the floor         |
| 7 <b>Go kàhm bün gwo heui deuimihn</b>          | The piano has been moved to the opposite side   |
| 8 <b>Ga chē hoi yahp làih tìhng-chē-chèuhng</b> | The car is driving into the car park            |
| 9 <b>Kéuih hàahng chēut heui gāai dōuh</b>      | She's walking out onto the street               |
| 10 <b>Kéuihdeih bün lohk heui yih láu</b>       | They're moving down to the second floor         |

# UNIT SIXTEEN

## Verbs of giving: **béi**

**béi** is an important verb used both on its own as a verb meaning 'give' and together with other verbs of giving. The verb **béi** takes two objects, the direct object (representing what is given) followed by the indirect object (representing the person to whom something is given):

**Kéuih béi-jó yāt haak mǎn ngóh**  
(lit. she gave one hundred dollars me)  
She gave me a hundred dollars

**Ngóh béi-jó tìuh sósìh ngóh taaitáai**  
(lit. I gave the key my wife)  
I gave my wife the key

**Béi gān choi ngóh ā**  
(lit. give catty vegetables me)  
Give me a catty of vegetables, please

**Léih béi dī mǐn kéuih lǎ!**  
(lit. you give some face (to) her)  
Show her some respect!

Note that the order of the two objects here is the reverse of that in English as well as that in Mandarin.

With other verbs of giving such as **gei** 'send' and **wàahn** 'return', **béi** 'to' is used to introduce the indirect object:

**Ngóh pàhngyáuh gei-jó jēung kǎat béi ngóh**  
My friend sent me a card

**Ngóh yíhngīng wàahn-jó chín béi léih**  
I've already returned the money to you



**Kéuih lóuhgūng làuh-jó gāan ūk bái kéuih**  
Her husband left her the house

**Yáuh go yáuh-chín-lóu gyūn-jó hóu dô chin bái daaih-hohk**  
A rich man donated a lot of money to the university

Note here the verb **sung** which is used in this pattern to mean 'give' in the sense of giving presents:

**Dī tūhngsih sung-jó dī fā bái kéuih**  
Her colleagues sent her some flowers

**Kéuih lihn-lihn sung sāangyaht láihmaht bái ngóh go jái**  
She gives my son a birthday present every year

**Nī jek gaaijī sung bái léih ge!**  
This ring is (a present) for you

A third verb may be added to the construction to indicate the purpose for which the object will be used:

**Kéuih wúih gei dī mahn-gín bái léih chīm-méng**  
She will send the documents for you to sign

**Go hohksāang chyùhnjān-jó pín mahnjéung bái ngóh tái**  
The student faxed an article for me to read

**Kéuih yiu jyú-faahn bái ūkkéi-yàhn sibk**  
She has to cook for her family (to eat)

## **bái and permission**

**bái** can also indicate permission (allowing, letting someone do something):

<b>Lóuhsī bái ngóhdeih jóu dī jáu</b>	The teacher let us leave early
<b>Ngóh bái léih yuhng ngóh go dihnlóuh</b>	I'll let you use my computer
<b>Mhóu bái yàhn jī a</b>	Don't let anyone know

## **Other verbs with two objects**

A number of other verbs can take two objects, such as **gaau** (teach), **mahn** (ask). Here the word order is different, with the indirect object coming first:

**Kéuih gaau-gwo hóu dô yàhn gongkàhm**  
She has taught a lot of people the piano

**Ngóh jūngyi mahn hobksāang mahntàih**  
I like to ask students questions

A similar pattern appears with verbs of deprivation such as **faht** (fine) and **tāu** (steal) or **chéung** (rob):

**Gūngsī faht ngóhdeih géi baak mǎn**  
The company fined us a few hundred dollars

**Ngóh yèhng-jó kéuih hóu dô chin**  
I won a lot of money from him

**Yáuh go cháak tǎu-jó ngóh sām bún syǎn**  
A thief has stolen three books from me

**Kàhm máahn yáuh yàhn chéung kéuih yéh**  
Last night someone robbed things from him

The verb **je** when used in this pattern can be ambiguous, meaning either 'lend' or 'borrow' according to the context:

**Ngóh je-jó kéuih yāt baak mǎn**  
I borrowed \$100 from him  
or I lent him \$100

**Ngóh gājē je-jó ngóh géi tiuh kwàhn**  
My sister has borrowed a few dresses from me  
or My sister has lent me a few dresses

To make the meaning clear, the preposition **tùhng** or **heung** can be used to mean 'borrow from':

**Ngóh tùhng kéuih jē-jó yāt baak mǎn** I borrowed \$100 from him  
or **Ngóh heung kéuih jē-jó yāt baak mǎn**

By contrast, using **béi** to introduce the indirect object gives the meaning 'lend':

**Ngóh je-jó yāt baak mǎn béi kéuih** I lent him \$100  
**Ngóh gājē je-jó géi tiuh kwàhn béi ngóh** My sister has lent me a few dresses

## Exercise 16.1

Add an indirect object to show who the object is given to:

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1 Ngóh yiu béi chin         | I have to pay (money)                                 |
| 2 Léih yiu wàahn syū        | You need to return some books                         |
| 3 Ngóh séung sung láihmaht  | I want to give a present                              |
| 4 Ngóh heui gei seun        | I'm going to send a letter                            |
| 5 Faaí dī dá-dihnwá         | Hurry up and call (telephone)                         |
| 6 Léih tīngyaht gāau gūngfo | Hand in your homework tomorrow                        |
| 7 Mgoi léih làuh sung       | Please leave some food (for someone to eat)           |
| 8 Ngóh sèhngyaht máaih sām  | I'm always buying clothes (for someone to wear)       |
| 9 Ngóh hóiyh gāan tou hei   | I can pick a film (for someone to watch)              |
| 10 Ngóh séung dīm gō        | I'd like to request a song (for someone to listen to) |

## Exercise 16.2

Translate the following sentences using appropriate verbs of giving:

- 1 He gave me some perfume (**dī hēungséui**)
- 2 The doctor (**yisāng**) gave me some medicine (**dī yeuhk**)
- 3 I'm going to return the documents (**dī mahn-gín**) to you
- 4 The boss (**lóuhbáan**) donated a lot of money to the church (**gaauwái**)
- 5 He sent his family (**úkkéi-yàhn**) a letter (**fūng seun**)
- 6 I lent him a pencil (**jī yùhnbāt**)
- 7 Please give him face (respect: **mín**)
- 8 You must give me back the key (**tùh sósìh**)
- 9 He wants to borrow two books (**léuhng bún syū**) from me
- 10 The lecturer (**go góngsi**) gave us some homework (**gūngfo**) to do

## Exercise 16.3

Add an indirect object to show the recipient of the action:

Example: Ngóh sīk gaaú gongkàhm I know how to teach the piano  
 → Ngóh sīk gaan daaih-yàhn gongkàhm I know how to teach adults the piano

- 
- |                                     |                                       |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Ngóhdeih juhng yiu béi chin       | We still have to pay (money)          |
| 2 Ngóh gājē je-jó hóu dô sām        | My sister lent a lot of clothes       |
| 3 Gó go yàhn sèhngyaht tâu yéh      | That person is always stealing things |
| 4 Yáuh yàhn chéung-jó hóu dô chin   | Somebody has stolen a lot of money    |
| 5 Ngóh heui je géi bún syū          | I'm going to borrow a few books       |
| 6 Kéuih séung mahn géi yeuhng yéh   | She wants to ask a few things         |
| 7 Ngóh go pàhngyáuh gaau Yīngmán ge | My friend teaches English             |
| 8 Jīngfú wúih faht chin ge          | The government will impose a fine     |

# UNIT SEVENTEEN

## Verbs and particles

The Cantonese verb combines with a rich, versatile set of particles (also known as verbal complements). The resulting combinations often resemble those known as verb-particle constructions (or phrasal verbs) in English, as in the following cases:

<b>tiu héi</b>	jump up	<b>tiu gwo</b>	jump over
<b>bái dái</b>	put down	<b>bái fān</b>	put back

The particles may indicate the state of an object as the result of an action, or different phases of an action (beginning, continuing or ending). According to the functions they serve, they can be divided into the following categories:

### 1 Directional particles, indicating the direction of movement or action:

<b>yahp</b> in	<b>máaih</b> buy + <b>yahp</b> → <b>máaih yahp</b>	buy in, acquire
<b>chēut</b> out	<b>gei</b> send + <b>chēut</b> → <b>gei chēut</b>	send out
<b>héi</b> up	<b>gwa</b> hang + <b>héi</b> → <b>gwa héi</b>	hang up (clothes, etc.)
<b>dái</b> down	<b>fong</b> put + <b>dái</b> → <b>fong dái</b>	put down
<b>fān</b> back	<b>ló</b> bring + <b>fān</b> → <b>ló fān</b>	bring back
<b>gwo</b> over, past	<b>ging</b> pass + <b>gwo</b> → <b>ging gwo</b>	pass by
<b>hōi</b> away	<b>hàahng</b> walk + <b>hōi</b> → <b>hàahng hōi</b>	walk away, step out
<b>màaih</b> closer	<b>hàahng</b> walk + <b>màaih</b> → <b>hàahng màaih</b>	come closer

Note that some of these items (**yahp**, **chēut**, **fān** and **gwo**) are the same as the directional verbs introduced in Unit 15. The meaning of the combinations is often predictable, as in the above examples, but it can also be figurative or quite idiomatic as in the following cases:

<b>héi</b>	up	<b>Lóuhbáan hóu tái héi kéuih</b> The boss has a high opinion of him <b>Ngóh juhng meih jough héi gūngfo</b> I haven't finished my homework
<b>fāan</b>	back	<b>Kéuih yihgā jough fāan gíngchaat</b> He's gone back to being a policeman <b>Ngóh séung máaih fāan dī leng sām</b> I want to buy myself some nice clothes
<b>gwo</b>	over	<b>Léih jeui hóu sé gwo pīn mán</b> You'd better rewrite (write over) the essay <b>Ngóh hah chí sīn túhng léih wáan gwo</b> I'll play with you again next time

2. Resultative particles, describing the extent or consequences of an action:

<b>báau</b>	full up	<b>sihk</b> → <b>sihk báau</b>	eat + <b>báau</b> eat one's full share
<b>cho</b>	wrongly	<b>gáan</b> → <b>gáan cho</b>	choose + <b>cho</b> make the wrong choice
<b>dihm</b>	conclusively	<b>gáu</b> → <b>gáu dih</b>	manage + <b>dihm</b> deal with
<b>dihng</b>	ready	<b>lám</b> → <b>lám dihng</b>	think + <b>dihng</b> think in advance
<b>dóu</b>	accomplish	<b>sáu</b> → <b>sáu dóu</b>	collect + <b>dóu</b> receive
<b>dou</b>	arrive	<b>heui</b> → <b>heui dou</b>	go + <b>dou</b> arrive
<b>hóu</b>	complete	<b>jough</b> → <b>jough hóu</b>	do + <b>hóu</b> finish up (doing)
<b>jihng</b>	remain	<b>sihk</b> → <b>sihk jihng</b>	eat + <b>jihng</b> leave behind (after eating)
<b>mihng</b>	clear	<b>sé</b> → <b>sé mihng</b>	write + <b>mihng</b> put in writing
<b>séi</b>	to death	<b>muhn</b> → <b>muhn séi</b>	bored + <b>séi</b> (be) bore(d) to death
<b>sèhng</b>	succeed	<b>jough</b> → <b>jough sèhng</b>	do + <b>sèhng</b> complete (a deal, etc.)
<b>waiih</b>	bad, broken	<b>gau</b> → <b>gau waiih</b>	teach + <b>waiih</b> lead astray
<b>yùhn</b>	to the end	<b>tái</b> → <b>tái yùhn</b>	read + <b>yùhn</b> finish reading

## Verbs of perception

An important sub-type of verb + particle construction involves verbs of perception. In these combinations, a verb denoting some mode of perception combines with the particle **dóu** to indicate successful perception of an object:

<b>tēng</b>	listen	→ <b>tēng dóu</b>	hear
<b>tái</b>	look, watch, read	→ <b>tái dóu</b>	see
<b>gín</b>	see, meet	→ <b>gín dóu</b>	see, notice
<b>wán</b>	seek, look for	→ <b>wán dóu</b>	find
<b>màhn</b>	smell	→ <b>màhn dóu</b>	smell (something)
<b>lám</b>	think (about)	→ <b>lám dóu</b>	think of (a problem, solution, etc.)
<b>gám gok</b>	feeling	→ <b>gok dóu, gam gok dóu</b>	feel (something)

The simple verbs on the left describe activities, the combinations with **dóu** successful perception:

<b>tēng gō</b>	listen to songs	<b>tēng dóu sēng</b>	hear a noise
<b>tái sǎnmán</b>	watch the news	<b>tái dóu hongou</b>	see a report
<b>lám baahnfaat</b>	(try to) think of a way		
<b>lám dóu go baahnfaat</b>	think of a way		

## Potential constructions

Verb-particle combinations can be separated by **mh** and **dāk** in constructions which express inability and potential respectively:

<b>heui mh dóu</b>	cannot get there
<b>heui dāk dóu</b>	can get there
<b>tái mh dóu</b>	cannot see
<b>tái (dāk) dóu</b>	can see
<b>tēng mh chéut</b>	cannot tell
<b>tēng dāk chéut</b>	can tell (by listening)
<b>tēng mh mihng</b>	cannot understand
<b>tēng dāk mihng</b>	can understand (what one hears)

Some examples:

**Ngóhdeih tái mh dóu go dihnyíng mihngsǐng**  
We could not see the film star

**Ngòh tēng dāk mihng léih ge Gwóngdūng-wá**  
I can understand your Cantonese

**Ngòh tēng dāk chéut léih haih Méihgwokyàhn**  
I can tell (by listening) that you're American

**Ngòh lám m̀h héi kéuih go Yīngmàhn méng**  
I cannot think of his English name

Such combinations often have idiomatic meanings:

<b>seun m̀h gwo</b>	cannot trust	<b>seun dāk gwo</b>	can trust
<b>máaih m̀h héi</b>	cannot afford	<b>máaih dāk héi</b>	can afford
<b>ding m̀h seuhn</b>	cannot stand	<b>ding dāk seuhn</b>	can stand
<b>gón m̀h chit</b>	cannot make it (in time)	<b>gón dāk chit</b>	can make it (in time)

### Exercise 17.1

Add a particle after the verb from the list provided:

(cho, dái, dou, dóu, fāan, gwo, hoi, yùhn)

- |                        |                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 tái _____ ga chē     | see the car                   |
| 2 báai _____ gih̄n sām | put the dress down            |
| 3 ló _____ dī seun     | bring back the mail (letters) |
| 4 gīng _____ yīyún     | pass by the hospital          |
| 5 lám _____ baahnfaat  | think of a solution           |
| 6 tái _____ boujī      | finish reading the newspaper  |
| 7 yihng _____ yàhn     | misrecognize someone          |
| 8 jáu _____            | go away                       |
| 9 sǎu _____ chín       | receive money                 |
| 10 heui _____ gūngsī   | arrive at the office          |

### Exercise 17.2

Translate the following using verbs of perception:

- 1 He often listens to stories (gújái)
- 2 I hear rumours (yih̄hyih̄n)
- 3 He's already thought of the answer (go daahp-on)
- 4 I saw an advertisement (go gwónggou)



- 5 You can feel the pressure (**ngaatlíhk**)
- 6 I smell smoke (**yínmeih**)
- 7 She likes to read novels (**síusyut**)
- 8 She doesn't like watching films (**hei**)

### Exercise 17.3

Express the following situations using **mh** and the particle **dóu**:

Example: You cannot see (your name) → **Ngóh tái mh dóu (ngóh go méng)**

- 1 You did not receive her letter (**kéuih fūng seun**)
- 2 You cannot buy the cinema ticket (**hei fēi**)
- 3 You could not see the sign (**go páai**)
- 4 You cannot smell the food (**dí sung**)
- 5 You cannot hear the aeroplanes (**fēigēi sēng**)
- 6 You cannot think of how to answer (**dím daap**)
- 7 You cannot remember (**gei**) so many names (**gam dô méng**)
- 8 You cannot eat so much ice cream (**gam dô syutgōu**)
- 9 You cannot find (**wán**) a letter (**fūng seun**)
- 10 Your friend cannot get (**heui**) to Shatin

### Exercise 17.4

Use the potential **dāk** to contradict the following statements:

Example: **Ngóhdeih heui mh dóu Bālàih** We cannot get to Paris →  
**heui dāk dóu** Yes we can (Note that this response is sufficient:  
 there is no need to repeat the subject or object.)

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 <b>Kéuih béi mh dóu ōnchyùhn-gám ngóh</b>     | He can't give me a sense of security |
| 2 <b>Ngóh gáau mh dihm léutng go sailouh</b>    | I can't deal with two kids           |
| 3 <b>Gām máahn tái mh dóu sīng-sīng</b>         | We can't see the stars tonight       |
| 4 <b>Nī dāan sāangyi jōuh mh sēhng</b>          | We cannot complete the deal          |
| 5 <b>Kéuihdeih seun mh gwo ga</b>               | They can't be trusted                |
| 6 <b>Léih saht máaih mh héi</b>                 | I bet you can't afford it            |
| 7 <b>Gām chí ngóhdeih jōuh mh chit</b>          | This time we won't manage it in time |
| 8 <b>Léih tēng mh mūhng ngóh ge Jūngmán àh?</b> | Can't you understand my Chinese?     |

# UNIT EIGHTEEN

## Actions and events: **jó** and **gwo**

Cantonese is said to lack tense, in the sense that the form taken by the verb does not consistently indicate the location of events in time. We have already seen how adverbs can serve to indicate when events take place (Unit 11); in this unit we introduce the aspect markers **jó** and **gwo** which also play an important role here. Although it may be tempting to equate **jó** and/or **gwo** with past tense, the fact of referring to the past is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for their use. They are termed aspect markers because they are concerned with the way an action is viewed – as complete, or as ongoing as discussed in Unit 19 – rather than directly with time.

### Perfective **jó**

A sentence can refer to the past merely by including an adverb such as **yíhchìhn** 'before' (Unit 11):

**Ngóhdeih yíhchìhn hái Gānàhdaaih jyuh ge**  
We lived in Canada before

By adding the perfective suffix **jó** to the verb it is possible to refer to the same situation as a complete whole:

**Ngóhdeih hái Gānàhdaaih jyuh-jó sāam lín**  
We lived in Canada for three years

In this case specifying the period of three years, now completed, calls for the suffix **jó**. Adverbs such as **yíhging** 'already', **ngāam-ngāam** 'just' and **tàuhsein** 'just now' also favour **jó**:

**Kéuih yíhging kyutdihng-jó chihjík**  
He has already decided to resign

**Kéuihdeih ngāam-ngāam lèih-jó-fān**  
They've just had a divorce

**Ngóh tàuhshín daap-jó léih ge mahntàih**  
I answered your question just now

Naturally this tends to place the action in the past. It also extends to a period of time up to and including the present:

**Ngóh taaitái gauu-jó sām lhn Yíngmán**  
My wife has taught/has been teaching English for three years

**Ngóh tái-jó bun yaht syū**  
I have been reading for half a day

**Ngóh sailóu jowh-jó gíngchaat hóu loih**  
My brother has been a policeman for a long time

## Experiential gwo

The 'experiential' meaning of **gwo** corresponds to one of the meanings of the present perfect in English – that something has happened at least once. Given a human subject, this is essentially the concept of experience, hence the grammatical term 'experiential' to describe this function. Typical cases are:

**Léih yáuh-móuh sihk-gwo Góngsik sái chāan a?**  
Have you eaten Hong Kong-style western food?

**Léih heui-gwo Taai-hūng Gwún meih a?**  
Have you been to the Space Museum?

Adverbs which call for **gwo** include **chàhnggīng** 'once' and **meih** 'not yet':

**Kéuih chàhnggīng oi-gwo ngóh** She once loved me  
**Ngóh meih yám-gwo nī jek jáu** I've not drunk this wine before  
(not \* **Ngóh meih yám-jó nī jek jáu**)

## jó versus gwo

**jó** and **gwo** may appear similar in meaning, both corresponding to the present perfect forms of the verb in English. Indeed there will be cases when either makes sense:

<b>Ngóh tái-jó sām go yīsāng</b>	I've (just) seen three doctors
<b>Ngóh tái-gwo sām go yīsāng</b>	I've seen three doctors (before)
<b>Kéuih sé-jó yāt pīn mán</b>	He's (just) written an article
<b>Kéuih sé-gwo yāt pīn mán</b>	He's written an article (before)
<b>Kéuih jyuh-jó sām go yuht yīyún</b>	He's been in hospital for three months (recently)
<b>Kéuih jyuh-gwo sām go yuht yīyún</b>	He's been in hospital for three months (once before)
<b>Ngóh wán-jó léih géi chí</b>	I've looked for you several times (recently)
<b>Ngóh wán-gwo léih géi chí</b>	I've looked for you several times (before)

In such cases, **jó** puts a focus on the result or current relevance of the action, while **gwo** makes it of less immediate relevance:

**Ngóh máaih-jó nī jek pàaihjī**  
I've bought this brand (and still have it)

**Ngóh máaih-gwo nī jek pàaihjī**  
I've bought this brand (before, in the past)

**Kéuih heui-jó gēichèuhng**  
He's gone to the airport (and is still there or on his way)

**Kéuih heui-gwo gēichèuhng**  
He's been to the airport (but is no longer there)

## Questions with meih

Statements with either **jó** or **gwo** can be turned into yes/no questions by adding **meih** (see also Unit 23).

<b>Léih sik-jó dāng meih a?</b>	Have you turned the light(s) off?
<b>Léih si-gwo nī júng hēungséui meih a?</b>	Have you tried this perfume before?

Such questions are answered by the verb + **jó** or **gwo**:

- A: **Léih chūng-jó-lèuhng meih a?** Have you taken a bath yet?  
 B: **Chūng-jó la/meih a** Yes/no  
 A: **Léih si-gwo nī dĩ meih a?** Have you ever tried these?  
 B: **Si-gwo la/meih (si-gwo) a** Yes/no

## Negating jó and gwo

Because it suggests completion of an action, **jó** is not compatible with negation. The negative counterpart of **jó** is **móuh** (have not) or **meih** (not yet):

- |  |                                  |                           |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
|  | <b>Kéuih yīngsihng-jó ngóh</b>   | He (has) promised me      |
|  | <b>Kéuih móuh yīngsihng ngóh</b> | He didn't promise me      |
| (not * <b>Kéuih móuh yīngsihng-jó ngóh</b> ) | <b>Kéuih meih yīngsihng ngóh</b> | He hasn't promised me yet |
| (not * <b>Kéuih meih yīngsihng-jó ngóh</b> ) | <b>Ngóhdeih sihk-jó-faahn</b>    | We've had our dinner      |
|  | <b>Ngóhdeih meih sihk-faahn</b>  | We haven't had dinner yet |
| (not * <b>Ngóhdeih meih sihk-jó-faahn</b> )  |                                  |                           |

Unlike **jó**, **gwo** can be negated either with **móuh** or **meih**:

- Ngóh móuh sāu-gwo léih ge chín** I have not received your money  
**Kéuih meih jow-gwo sáuseuh** She has not yet had an operation

## Exercise 18.1

Choose **jó** or **gwo** to fill in the gaps:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 <b>Ngóh gin _____ kéuih ùkkéi yàhn</b>      | I've met his family before                   |
| 2 <b>Ngóh tàuhshín sái _____ tàuh</b>         | I've just washed my hair                     |
| 3 <b>Kéuih gāmjū sihk _____ jóuchāan la</b>   | He had breakfast this morning                |
| 4 <b>Ngóh tēng _____ nī sáu gō</b>            | I've heard this song before                  |
| 5 <b>Ngóh heui _____ yāt chí Bākging</b>      | I've been to Beijing once                    |
| 6 <b>Ngóh bou _____ méng hohk yàuhséui</b>    | I've applied for swimming lessons            |
| 7 <b>Kéuih yèhng _____ tàuh jéung</b>         | She's won the first prize!                   |
| 8 <b>Kéuih meih háau _____ daih yāt mihng</b> | She hasn't got first place in an exam before |
| 9 <b>Kéuih meih máaih _____ sán chē</b>       | He hasn't bought a new car before            |

- 10 Ngóh ngāam-ngāam maaih \_\_\_\_\_ I just sold the car  
ga chē

## Exercise 18.2

Add **jó** or **gwo** to the following questions in accordance with the translation:

- 1 Léih lám \_\_\_\_\_ yihmáhn meih a? Have you ever considered emigrating?
- 2 Go bibbi fan \_\_\_\_\_ meih a? Has the baby gone to sleep yet?
- 3 Léih si \_\_\_\_\_ nī jek yeuhk meih a? Have you tried this medicine before?
- 4 Léih yeuk \_\_\_\_\_ kéuih meih a? Have you made an appointment with him yet?
- 5 Léih sānchíng \_\_\_\_\_ gó fahn gūng meih a? Have you applied for that job yet?
- 6 Ga chē johng \_\_\_\_\_ meih a? Has the car ever had an accident?
- 7 Bún syū chēutháan \_\_\_\_\_ meih a? Has the book been published yet?
- 8 Léih cheung \_\_\_\_\_ nī sáu gō meih a? Have you sung this song before?
- 9 Léih gāmjiu tái \_\_\_\_\_ boují meih a? Have you read the newspaper this morning?
- 10 Lóuhbáan fāan \_\_\_\_\_ ūkkéi meih a? Has the boss gone home yet?

## Exercise 18.3

Negate the following sentences (refer to Unit 14 if necessary):

Example: **Kéuihdeih git-jó-fān** They've got married; **Kéuihdeih móuh git-fān** (They have not got married) or **Kéuihdeih meih git fān** (They're not married yet)

- 1 Dī hohksāang jáu-jó The students have gone
- 2 Ngóh go jái heui-gwo Yínggwok My son has been to England
- 3 Kéuih ló-jó chēpauh She's got her driving licence
- 4 Ngóhdeih jowh-gwo jingfú gūng We've worked for the government before
- 5 Ngóh dehng-jó fóng I've reserved a room
- 6 Go heisyū fong-jó ga The secretary has taken a day off
- 7 Ngóh yám-gwo Chingdóu bējáu I've drunk Tsingtao beer before
- 8 Ngóh tùhng kéuih paak-gwo-tō I've been on a date with him

- |    |                                 |                                 |
|----|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 9  | <b>Dihnfai gā-jó ga</b>         | Electricity costs have gone up  |
| 10 | <b>Lóuhbáan laauh-gwo kéuih</b> | The boss has scolded him before |

### Exercise 18.4

Choose an appropriate adverb to add to each sentence from the list (a-f):

- |   |   |   |                    |          |
|---|---|---|--------------------|----------|
| 1 | <b>Kéuih meih si-gwo chih dou</b><br>She's never been late                  | a | <b>yíhnging</b>    | already  |
| 2 | <b>Ngóhdeih heui-gwo léih úkkéi</b><br>We've been to your house             | b | <b>ngāam-ngāam</b> | just     |
| 3 | <b>Ngóh sinsāang fāan-jó séjihlauh</b><br>My husband has gone to the office | c | <b>chàhnggīng</b>  | once     |
| 4 | <b>Kéuih sāang-jó go jái</b><br>She's had a child                           | d | <b>yíhchihn</b>    | before   |
| 5 | <b>Ngóh háasuleuih-gwo chihjik</b><br>I've considered resigning             | e | <b>jeuigahn</b>    | recently |
| 6 | <b>Gāan jáulauh sām-jó muhn</b><br>The restaurant has closed                | f | <b>chùhnglòih</b>  | never    |

# UNIT NINETEEN

## Activities: **gán** and **jyuh**

The aspect markers **gán** and **jyuh** attached to verbs express ongoing actions.

### 1 Progressive **gán** and **háidouh**

The progressive suffix **-gán**, like the English progressive '-ing', is used for ongoing activities:

**Kéuih yihgā hōi-gán-wúi**                      She's having a meeting  
**Kéuihdeih léuhng go kīng-gán-gái**      The two of them are chatting

Unlike the English '-ing' in such cases, **gán** does not have to be present. Thus the same sentences shown above are also possible without **gán** (although a sentence particle may be needed in its place: see Unit 25):

**Kéuih yihgā hōi-wúi wo**                      She's having a meeting  
**Kéuihdeih léuhng go kīng-gái la**      The two of them are chatting

Although referring most often to the present, verbs with **gán** may apply to an activity in the past. In such cases there is typically a past time adverb present to make this clear (see Unit 11; note also the adverb **jūhng** 'still'):

**Gauh lín kéuih jūhng duhk-gán jūnghohk**  
Last year she was still studying in secondary school

**Kéuihdeih seuhng go yuht jūhng paak-gán-tō, yihgā yihgīng fān-jó-sáu la**  
Last month they were still dating, now they're already separated

Similarly, **gán** may be used in subordinate clauses referring to the past:



**Ngóh duhk-gán síuhohk gójahnsih, kéuih yíhng sīk ngóh**  
 (lit. I studying primary school that time, he already knew me)  
 When I was in primary school, she already knew me

**Léih fan-gán-gaaú gójahnsih, yáuh yàhn dá-dihnwá làih**  
 (lit. you sleeping that time, somebody telephoned come)  
 Somebody called while you were sleeping

An alternative means of describing an ongoing action is by using **háidouh**, which literally means 'to be here/there':

<b>Ngóh háidouh jouh gūngfo</b>	I'm (here) doing homework
<b>Léih háidouh dāng bīngō a?</b>	Who are you waiting for?
<b>Kéuihdeih háidouh aai-gāu</b>	They're having an argument

Because of the literal meaning 'here', it is suitable where the activity is going on in a location close to the speaker. **háidouh** and **gán** can also be used together in expressing progressive meaning:

<b>Kéuih háidouh jyú-gán-faahn</b>	She's cooking
<b>Lóuhbāan háidouh sé-gán-seun</b>	The boss is writing letters

## 2 Continuous jyuh

**jyuh** added to a verb describes a continuous activity or state without change. It is associated with particular verbs, such as those denoting stationary situations:

**Ga dihdāanchē jó-jyuh go chēutháu**  
 The motorbike is blocking the exit

**Kéuih sèhngyaht jā-jyuh fahn bouji**  
 She's always holding a newspaper

**Ngóh yaht-yaht deui-jyuh tūhng-yéung yāt bāan yàhn**  
 I face the same bunch of people every day

Certain transitive verbs with **jyuh** indicate putting something in a state, as with **kám-jyuh** 'cover' and **bóng-jyuh** 'tie up':

**Léih yiu yuhng go goi kám-jyuh go wok**  
 You need to use the top to cover the wok

**Kéuih yuhng dī hóu leng ge jí bāau-jyuh fahn láihunabt**

She used some nice paper to wrap up the gift

**Kéuih móuh baahnfaat bóng-jyuh kéuih lóuhgūng**

There's no way she can tie up her husband (physically or metaphorically)

Note that verb + **jyuh** can mean something different from the simple verb by itself, such as **lám-jyuh** 'intend' vs. **lám** 'think', **tái-jyuh** 'watch over' vs. **tái** 'look, see':

**Ngóh lám-jyuh chéng kéuihdeih sihk-faahn**

I intend to invite them to dinner

**Léih tái-jyuh nī léuhng go sailouhjái, mhóu bái kéuihdeih dá-gāu**

Keep an eye on these two kids, (and) don't let them fight

A verb with **jyuh** can also be used to describe an action carried out simultaneously with another:

**Kéuih mohng-jyuh ngóh siu**

(lit. he watching me smiled)

He smiled (while looking) at me

**Kéuih deui-jyuh ngóh haam**

(lit. she facing me cried)

She cried at (while facing) me

**Léih gān-jyuh ngóh hàahng**

(lit. you following me walk)

Walk after (following) me

Note that there is no conjunction linking the two verbs (this is a characteristic of the sequences of verb phrases known as serial verb constructions).

## **gán versus jyuh**

Since both may be translated with progressive '-ing' forms in English, it can be difficult to choose between **gán** and **jyuh**. As a general rule, **gán** is appropriate for activities involving change or movement and **jyuh** for static ones. In some cases either is possible, sometimes with a marked difference of meaning:

a	<b>Kéuih ló-gán dī wuhn-geuih</b>	He's fetching the toys
b	<b>Kéuih ló-jyuh dī wuhn-geuih</b>	He's holding the toys
a	<b>Kéuih jeuk-gán sāam</b>	She's getting dressed
b	<b>Kéuih jeuk-jyuh tuih dyún kwàhn</b>	She was wearing a short skirt
a	<b>Kéuih daai-gán tuih jyunsehk génglín</b>	She's putting on a diamond necklace
b	<b>Kéuih daai-jyuh tuih jyunsehk génglín</b>	She's wearing a diamond necklace

In each case **gán** indicates a dynamic, changing situation and **jyuh** a static one.

### Exercise 19.1

Add **gán** and/or **háidouh** to express progressive aspect in the following sentences:

Example: **Kéuih tái syū** She's reading (a book) → **Kéuih tái-gán syū**

- |    |  |                                      |
|----|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Ngóh yihgā wuhn sāam</b>            | I'm changing (my clothes) now        |
| 2  | <b>Kéuihdeih kàhm-máahn dá mǎhjeuk</b> | They were playing mahjong last night |
| 3  | <b>Kéuih góng dihnwá</b>               | She's (talking) on the phone         |
| 4  | <b>Yihgā lohk yúh</b>                  | It's raining now                     |
| 5  | <b>Dī sailouhjái wáan séui</b>         | The children are playing water games |
| 6  | <b>Ngóhdeih hàahng làih</b>            | We're coming (walking) over          |
| 7  | <b>Kéuih yihgā chūng-lèuhng</b>        | She's taking a shower                |
| 8  | <b>Ngóh go jái waahk-wá</b>            | My son is drawing                    |
| 9  | <b>Lóuhbáan hoi-wúí</b>                | The boss is having a meeting         |
| 10 | <b>Kéuih juhng lāu ngóhdeih</b>        | She's still angry with us            |

### Exercise 19.2

Add **gán** or **jyuh** as appropriate to complete the following sentences:

Example: **Ngóh tái sāam** I'm washing clothes → **Ngóh tái-gán sāam**

- |   |                              |                         |
|---|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | <b>Ngóh tái tuih sósih</b>   | I'm holding a key       |
| 2 | <b>Kéuih máaih sung</b>      | She is buying groceries |
| 3 | <b>Ngóhdeih hóu gwa léih</b> | We miss you very much   |
| 4 | <b>Léih jyú mǎtyéh a?</b>    | What are you cooking?   |
| 5 | <b>Kéuih yám gafē</b>        | He's drinking coffee    |

- |    |   |                                   |
|----|---|-----------------------------------|
| 6  | <b>Díngáai léih mohng ngóh a?</b>       | Why are you staring at me?        |
| 7  | <b>Dí sailouhjái chūng-lèuhng</b>       | The children are taking a bath    |
| 8  | <b>Hóu dô yáhn wán gūng</b>             | Many people are looking for a job |
| 9  | <b>Ngóh yihgā daap mahntàih</b>         | I'm answering questions right now |
| 10 | <b>Kéuih sèhngyaht jeuk dī gauh sām</b> | He's always wearing old clothes   |

### Exercise 19.3

Add **jyuh** and the verb provided to expand the following sentences:

Example: **Léih gān ngóh** Follow me,  
(cheung 'sing') → **Léih gān-jyuh ngóh cheung** Sing along with me

- Kéuih jeuk sām**  
He wears clothes (yàuh-séui 'swim')
- Kéuih líng dī hàhngléih**  
He carried the baggage (jáu 'leave')
- Kéuih tái dihsih**  
She's watching television (jauh gūngfo 'do homework')
- Díngáai léih m̀h mohng ngóh?**  
Why aren't you looking at me (góng 'speak')?
- Ngóh jūngyí tēng yāmgohk**  
I like to listen to music (yāusik 'relax')
- Kéuih sèhngyaht chí léih go léui**  
He's always hanging around your daughter (heui gāai 'go out')
- Go mām̀h póuh go jái**  
The mother is carrying her son (chéut gāai 'go out')
- Díngáai léih daai ngáahn-gēng?**  
Why do you wear your glasses? (fan-gau 'sleep')
- Ngóh lóuhgūng jā ga sān chē**  
My husband is driving his new car (lāih jip ngóh 'to meet me')
- Ngóh m̀h wúih jó léih**  
I won't get in your way (faat daah 'make money')

# UNIT TWENTY

## Auxiliary verbs

Auxiliary verbs are used together with a main verb. The most important auxiliary verbs are:

<b>wúih</b>	will, would	<b>yīnggōi</b>	should, ought to
<b>hóiyh</b>	can, may	<b>yiú, sēuiyiú</b>	want, need
<b>sīk</b>	know (how to)	<b>séung</b>	want to

They express mainly 'modal' meanings having to do with possibility and necessity. The auxiliary verbs come before the main verb:

<b>Ngóh wúih sé seun bēi léih</b>	I'll write to you
<b>Léih yīnggōi douh-hip</b>	You should apologise
<b>Kéuih sīk góng Faatmán</b>	He can speak French

An adverb may intervene between auxiliary and verb, as in the following examples:

<b>Léih hóiyh sīn heui Jūngwàahn</b>	You can go to Central <i>first</i>
<b>Ngóh yīnggōi dō dī wanduhng</b>	I should exercise <i>more</i>
<b>Ngóhdeih séung faai dī bātyihp</b>	We want to graduate <i>quickly</i>

Note that some of the auxiliary verbs double as main verbs:

Main verb	Auxiliary
<b>sīk</b> to know (someone)	<b>sīk</b> to know (how to do something)
<b>yiú</b> to want (something, someone)	<b>yiú</b> to need (to do)

Compare the meanings in the following:

<b>Ngóh sĭk kéuih</b>	I know her
<b>Ngóh sĭk yàuh-séui</b>	I know how to swim
<b>Kéuih yiu gáfē</b>	She wants coffee
<b>Kéuih yiu sihk-yéh</b>	She wants/needs to eat

A rare irregularity should be noted here. The form **m̃h yiu** means 'don't want', usually as a main verb:

<b>Ngóh m̃h yiu tihmbán, ngōi</b>	I don't want any dessert, thanks
<b>Kéuih m̃h yiu daap fēigēi</b>	He doesn't want to take the plane

However, the negative form of **yiu** used as an auxiliary meaning 'need' is not **m̃h yiu** but **msái**:

	<b>Ngóh gāmyaht yiu fāan gūng</b>	I need to go to work today
but	<b>Ngóh gāmyaht msái fāan gūng</b>	I don't need to go to work today
	<b>Kéuih yiu tái yīsāng</b>	He needs to see the doctor
but	<b>Kéuih msái tái yīsāng</b>	He doesn't need to see the doctor

**sēuiyiu** is a more explicit form of **yiu**:

<b>Ngóhdeih sēuiyiu dō dĩ yāusĭk</b>	We need to rest more
<b>Léih m̃h sēuiyiu gam sām-gāp</b>	You needn't be so impatient

**háng** 'to be willing' is used mainly (though not exclusively) in the negative form **m̃h háng**:

<b>Ngóh go jái m̃h háng fāan hohk</b>	My son won't go to school
<b>Kéuih m̃h háng tēng ngóh dīhnwá</b>	She won't answer my calls
<b>Ngóh gājē háng bōng sáu</b>	My (elder) sister is willing to help

## Modal meanings

Since Cantonese does not have a grammatical category of tense, **wúih** should not be thought of simply as a future tense. Rather, **wúih** has a range of meanings including future ('will') and conditional ('would'):

<b>Ngóh fīngyaht wúih làih</b>	I'll come tomorrow
<b>Ngóh m̃h wúih bōng kéuih</b>	I wouldn't help him

The basic modal meanings can be modified by modal adverbs such as **waahkjé** and **hólàhng** 'perhaps', **hángdihng** and **yátdihng** 'certainly':

<b>Kéuihdeih waahkjé wáih yíhmáhn</b>	They may (perhaps) emigrate
<b>Kéuihdeih hángdihng wáih yíhmáhn</b>	They will definitely emigrate
<b>Ngóh hólàhng wáih jouh</b>	I may do it
<b>Ngóh yátdihng wáih jouh</b>	I will certainly do it

Note here the distinction between **yátdihng yiu** meaning 'must' in the sense of obligation and **yátdihng haih** in the sense of logical necessity or inference:

<b>Léih yátdihng yiu làih</b>	You really must come
<b>Léih yátdihng haih jyūn-gā</b>	You must be an expert
<b>Kéuih yátdihng yiu jouh ge</b>	He must (has to) do it
<b>Yátdihng haih kéuih jouh ge</b>	It must have been him (who did it)

Since **haih** is not used with adjectives (Unit 9), **yátdihng** alone indicates inference with an adjective:

<b>Léih yátdihng hóu guih</b>	You must be tired
<b>Léih go léui yátdihng hóu lēk ge</b>	Your daughter must be pretty smart

**yīnggōi** can mean 'should' in the sense of either obligation or probability:

**Léih yīnggōi jéunsih fān gūng**  
You should get to work on time

**Léih fahn láihmaht yīnggōi jéunsih don**  
Your present should arrive on time (I expect)

**Kéuih gānyaht yīnggōi fān làih ge**  
He should be back today (I predict, and/or he is obliged to do so)

Finally, note that the meanings of possibility and ability are often *more* naturally expressed by **dāk** following the verb, rather than by **hóiyih** 'can':

**Léihdeih jáu dāk la** (or **Léihdeih hóiyih jáu la**)  
(lit. you leave can already)  
You can leave now

**Tiuh yú sihk dāk la** (or **Tiuh yú hóiyih sihk la**)  
(lit. the fish eat can already)  
The fish can be eaten

Similarly, verb + particle combinations with **mh** (see Unit 17) are often used to express the negative counterparts meaning 'cannot' in preference to **mh hóiyih**:

<b>Chín hông m̃h dóu léih</b> (lit. money help not succeed you) Money can't help you	or	<b>Chín m̃h hóiyh hông léih</b> (lit. money not can help you) Money can't help you
<b>Ngóh wán m̃h dóu kéuih</b> (lit. I find not succeed her) I can't find her	(not	<b>*Ngóh m̃h hóiyh wán dóu kéuih)</b>

There is a subtle difference between ... **m̃h dóu**, meaning inability to do something, and **m̃h ... dāk**, meaning that something is not allowed or not possible due to external circumstances:

<b>Ngóh hông m̃h dóu léih</b>	I can't help you (because I lack the ability)
<b>Ngóh m̃h hông dāk léih</b>	I can't help you (because I'm not allowed to, I have no time, etc.)

Consequently, inability to perceive something is expressed with ... **m̃h dóu**:

**Ngóh gāmyaht séung-fūng, m̃ahn m̃h dóu yéh**  
I have a cold today, (so I) can't smell anything

**Ngóh lám m̃h dóu baahnfaat**  
I can't think of a solution

See also Unit 17 on verbs of perception.

## Exercise 20.1

Translate the following using a modal auxiliary:

- 1 I need to go home (**fāan ūkkéi**)
- 2 She knows how to drive (**jā chē**)
- 3 I'm going to apologize (**douh-hip**)
- 4 My friend will take you there (**daai léih heui**)
- 5 You can take the train (**daap fóchē heui**)
- 6 We should arrive on time (**jéunsih dou**)
- 7 You may leave early (**jáu jáu**)
- 8 I will return the books (**wáahn syū**)
- 9 He knows how to answer the question (**daap mahntàih**)
- 10 She should get married (**git-fān**)
- 11 She's willing to reduce the price (**gáam ga**)
- 12 We're willing to compromise (**tóhhip**)



- 13 They're not willing to wait any longer (**dáng loih dĩ**)  
 14 My wife doesn't need to attend the meeting (**hōi-wúi**)  
 15 We don't need to worry (**dāamsām**)

## Exercise 20.2

Make the following statements negative:

- |                           |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Ngóh sīk kéuih          | I know him                     |
| 2 Ngóh sīk heui gódouh    | I know how to go there         |
| 3 Ngóh yiu fan-gaau       | I need to sleep                |
| 4 Kéuih yiu faahn         | She wants rice                 |
| 5 Kéuih wúih faan úkkéi   | She will go home               |
| 6 Léih hóiyh lauh dái     | You can stay behind            |
| 7 Léih hóiyh wuhn sām     | You may change your clothes    |
| 8 Ngóhdeih yinggoi yäusik | We should rest                 |
| 9 Kéuih yinggoi máaih láu | She should buy a flat          |
| 10 Kéuih sīk tàahn kähm   | He knows how to play the piano |

## Exercise 20.3

Express the following situations using a modal verb:

- 1 You want to date (**yeuk**) someone
- 2 Undertake to inform (**túngjī**) someone on a future occasion
- 3 Regret that you cannot help (**bōng**) someone this time
- 4 You don't need anything to eat (**sīhk**)
- 5 Someone should drive more carefully (**sūsām dĩ**)
- 6 Give someone permission to give in their homework late (**chih dĩ gāau gūngfo**)
- 7 Tell your students they should not be so rude (**gam chōulóuh**)
- 8 You are not willing to pay so much (**béi gam dō chún**)
- 9 You do not know how to get to the post office (**heul yàuh-gók**)
- 10 Your friend would not agree (**tùhngyí**)

## Exercise 20.4

Add a modal adverb to the sentences provided to give the meaning indicated:

Example: Léih yiu jóu dĩ sánchez → Léih yātdihng yiu jóu dĩ sánchez  
 You must apply early

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 Ngóh gām-lín wúih git-fān                    | I may get married this year             |
| 2 Ngóh gām-lín wúih git-fān                    | I will definitely get married this year |
| 3 Kéuihdeih hái ùkkéi                          | They must be at home                    |
| 4 Kéuihdeih hái ùkkéi                          | They may be at home                     |
| 5 Ngóh wúih sahpyih dím jichihn fāan dou ùkkéi | I will definitely be home before twelve |
| 6 Ngóh yiu sahpyih dím jichihn fāan dou ùkkéi  | I must be home before twelve            |
| 7 Fūng seun yiu fīngyaht dou ge                | The letter must arrive tomorrow         |
| 8 Fūng seun haih kàhmyaht dou ge               | It must have arrived yesterday          |
| 9 Go leuhtsi yiu hóu lēk                       | The lawyer must be (needs to be) good   |
| 10 Go leuhtsi hóu lēk                          | The lawyer must be good (it seems)      |

## Exercise 20.5

Give alternatives to the following sentences using **dāk** (see Unit 17) or **mh dóu**:

Example: Léih hóyih tái You can take a look → Léih tái dāk

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 Ngóh gām-máahn hóyih pùih léih          | I can keep you company tonight                |
| 2 Ngóhdeih mh hóyih yahp heui             | We can't go in                                |
| 3 Léih yihgā hóyih jáu                    | You can leave now                             |
| 4 Hohksāang mh hóyih góng daaih wah       | Students may not tell lies                    |
| 5 Hóyih sihk la                           | We can eat (now)                              |
| 6 Ngóh gāmyaht mh hóyih heui              | I can't go today                              |
| 7 Ngóh mh hóyih sihk tihmbán              | I can't eat dessert                           |
| 8 Ngóh mh hóyih daap léih                 | I can't answer you                            |
| 9 Jéung gēipiu mh hóyih góí               | The air ticket cannot be changed              |
| 10 Nidouh mh hóyih tēng Daaihluhk dihtoih | Here we cannot hear mainland radio programmes |

# UNIT TWENTY-ONE

## Passives

Cantonese passives are signalled by a **béi** phrase similar to the English *by* phrase. The **béi** phrase (**béi** + a noun phrase indicating the agent of the action) occurs before the verb:

**Dī syutgōu béi dī sailouhjái síhk-jó**  
(*lit.* the ice cream by the children eaten)  
The ice cream was eaten by the children

**Bún syū béi go hohksāang je-jó**  
(*lit.* the book by a student borrowed)  
The book was borrowed by a student

**Ngóh go jái béi sīnsāang faht-gwo**  
(*lit.* my son by teacher punished)  
My son has been punished by the teacher

The noun phrase denoting the agent of the action is obligatory in spoken Cantonese, in contrast to English and Mandarin which allow agentless passives. When the identity of the agent is unknown or left unspecified, the word **yàhn** 'person' or **yéh** 'thing' is used generically:

**Ngóh go ngàhnbāau béi yàhn tâu-jó**  
(*lit.* my wallet by person stolen)  
My wallet was stolen

**Kéuih sèhngyaht béi yàhn ngāak**  
(*lit.* he often by person cheated)  
He often gets cheated

**Ngóh yauih béi yéh ngáuih chān**  
(*lit.* I again by something bitten)  
I've been bitten again

Note the contrast with the English translations in which the agent is not mentioned at all.

A peculiarity of Cantonese passives is that a passive verb can still take a direct object. This applies especially to those verbs introduced in Unit 16 which take two objects, such as **tāu** 'steal', **faht** 'fine' and **mahn** 'ask':

**Kéuih bái yàhn tāt-jó go ngàhnbaau**  
She had her purse stolen

**Ngóh bái yàhn faht-jó hóu dô chín**  
I was fined a lot of money

**Ngóh m̀h séung bái yàhn mahn gam dô yéh**  
I don't want to be asked so much

This possibility gives rise to alternative passive forms for the same idea:

- |   |   |                                |
|---|---|--------------------------------|
| a | <b>Ngóh go ch̀pàaih bái yàhn ló-jó</b>  | My licence has been taken away |
| b | <b>Ngóh bái yàhn ló-jó go ch̀pàaih</b>  | I've had my licence taken away |
| a | <b>Kéuih ga ch̀h bái yàhn johng-gwo</b> | Her car has been dented        |
| b | <b>Kéuih bái yàhn johng-gwo ga ch̀h</b> | She's had her car dented       |

The first version provides an objective statement of events, while the second focuses on the effect on the person suffering the misfortune.

## Passive meaning without bái

There are a number of ways in which Cantonese effectively avoids passives, involving constructions which appear to be passive in meaning but lack the **bái** phrase:

**Gān fóng yàuh-jó la**  
(lit. the room painted)  
The room has been painted

**Nī gihn sām jeuk-gwo yāt chí**  
(lit. this blouse worn once)  
This blouse has been worn once

**Ga gēi juhng jing-gán**  
(lit. the machine still mending)  
The machine is still being mended

These cases may be seen as instances of topicalization – making the object the topic of the sentence by placing it first, as described in the next unit. Typically the verb has an aspect marker as in the above examples, or a verbal particle indicating the result of the action (see Unit 17):

**Jek gáu wán fān la**

(*lit.* the dog found back)

The dog has been found again

**Yàuhhei wáan yùhn la**

(*lit.* game played finish)

The game is finished

**Tiuh yú jīng hóu la**

(*lit.* the fish steamed complete)

The fish is done (having been steamed)

This pattern also commonly occurs with an auxiliary (see Unit 20):

**Dī cháugā yīnggōi fah ge**

(*lit.* those speculators should punish)

Those speculators should be punished

**Ngóh go léui sèhngyaht yiu póuh**

(*lit.* my daughter always wants carrying)

My daughter always wants to be carried

**Tiuh fu sái-msái góí a?**

(*lit.* the trousers need to alter or not)

Do the trousers need to be altered?

In such sentences a subject could be inserted:

**Tiuh fu (ngóh) sái-msái góí a?**

(*lit.* the trousers (I) need to alter or not)

Do (I) need to alter the trousers?

**Nī gāan ūk (ngóhdeih) yīnggōi jōngsāu**

(*lit.* this house (we) should redecorate)

(We) should redecorate this house

**Nī dī yùhnjāk (yàhn-yàhn) yiu gei-jyuh**

(*lit.* these principles (everyone) need remember)

(Everyone) needs to remember these principles

For the most part, however, the subject remains implicit and is understood as 'one' or 'people' in general.

### Exercise 21.1

Turn the following active sentences into their passive counterparts using **béi**:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 Ga chē-jó-jyuh ngóhdeih                    | The car is blocking us                    |
| 2 Gíngchaat jūk-jó kéuihdeih                 | The police have caught them               |
| 3 Dī sailouhjái gáau lyuhn-jó gāan fóng      | The children have made a mess of the room |
| 4 Nī go hohksāang yèhng-jó gó go daaih jéung | The student has won that grand prize      |
| 5 Kéuih je-jó ngóh go saúdóí                 | She has borrowed my handbag               |
| 6 Dī chē séng chòuh séng-jó ngóh             | The noise of the cars has awakened me     |
| 7 Kéuih go làahm-pàhngyáuh máaih-jó gāan ūk  | Her boyfriend has bought the house        |
| 8 Kéuihdeih jing waaah-jó go dihnlóuh        | They have broken the computer             |
| 9 Ngóh yuhng-jó dī chin                      | I have used the money                     |
| 10 Kéuihdeih sihk-jó dī jyügwūlik            | They have eaten the chocolate             |
| 11 Kéuih dá laahn-jó jek būi                 | He has broken the glass                   |
| 12 Ngóh tái-gwo fūng seun                    | I have read the letter                    |
| 13 Kéuih hoi-gwo go seunséung                | He has opened the mailbox                 |
| 14 Kéuih jing-gán ga chē                     | He is mending the car                     |
| 15 Kéuihdeih maaih-jó fūk wá                 | They have sold the picture                |

### Exercise 21.2

Turn the following sentences into passive ones by either a **béi** + **yàhn** phrase or a **béi** + **yéh** phrase (note **yáuh yàhn** meaning 'somebody': see Unit 6). In some cases there may be two alternative versions:

Example: **Yáuh yàhn chéung-jó ngóh go léuih-pàhngyáuh** Someone stole my girlfriend from me → **Ngóh go léuih-pàhngyáuh béi yàhn chéung-jó** or **Ngóh béi yàhn chéung-jó go léuih-pàhngyáuh**

- |                                  |                         |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Yáuh yàhn ló-jó ngóh go saubūu | Someone took my watch   |
| 2 Yáuh yàhn hoi-jó douh mūhn     | Someone opened the door |

3 Yáuh yàhn sik-jó láahngheigēi	Someone turned off the air conditioning
4 Yáuh yàhn ngāak-jó kéuih dī chin	Someone cheated him out of his money
5 Yáuh yàhn máaih-jó dī syū	Someone bought the books
6 Yáuh yéh ngáauh dóu ngóh jek sáu	Something has bitten my hand
7 Yáuh dī yéh fāahn dóu kéuih	Something has troubled him
8 Yáuh dī yéh yíngheung dóu kéuih ge sāmchihng	Something has affected her mood

### † Exercise 21.3

Render the passive sentences below with non-passive (topicalized) alternatives, adding an aspect marker or auxiliary where appropriate:

Example: The tuition has been paid (**béi**) → **Hohkfai béi-jó la**

- 1 This room (**gāan fóng**) has been booked (**dehng**)
- 2 The house (**gāan ūk**) is being built (**béi**)
- 3 The film (**tou hei**) should be seen (**tái**)
- 4 The book (**bún syū**) has been published (**chēutbáan**)
- 5 The shirt (**gihn sāam**) doesn't need to be ironed (**tong**)
- 6 Your plan (**go gaiwaahk**) is being considered (**háauleuih**)
- 7 The car (**ga chē**) has been checked (**yihm**) before
- 8 The picture (**fūk séung**) has been taken (**yíng**) already
- 9 The light (**jáan dāng**) has been turned off (**sik**)
- 10 The child (**go sailouhjái**) always wants to be carried (**póuh**)

# UNIT TWENTY-TWO

## Word order and topicalization

For the most part, word order in Cantonese may be said to follow the pattern subject – verb – object, much as in English:

Subject	Verb	Object	
<b>Ngóh</b>	<b>jūngyi</b>	<b>kéuih</b>	I like him/her
<b>Ngóh sailóu</b>	<b>máaih-jó</b>	<b>gāan ūk</b>	My brother has bought a house

It would be more accurate, however, to say that while Cantonese can be treated in this way – this order normally works – departures from it play an important role in the language. In particular, the sentence need not begin with the subject. Indeed, the object of the verb often comes first if it represents what the sentence is felt to be about:

**Nī go yàhn ngóh gin-gwo**  
(*lit.* this person I have seen)  
I've seen this person before

**Póutūng-wá ngóh sīk síu-síu**  
(*lit.* Putonghua I know a little)  
I know a little Putonghua

**Fahn bouji léih báai hái hīndouh a?**  
(*lit.* the newspaper you put where)  
Where did you put the newspaper?

This pattern is known as topicalization – making something other than the subject the ‘topic’ of the sentence – and while also possible in English, its use is much more widespread in Cantonese. In English it is used mostly for contrasting two things, explicitly or implicitly, and this also occurs in Cantonese:



**Pihnggwó ngóh jūngyi síhk**

Apples I like to eat (but not bananas)

**Chín ngóh hóyih béi léih, síhgaan jauh nòh hóyih laak**

Money I can give you, but not time

**Deihtit ngóh chóh-gwo, dihnchē jauh meih (chóh-gwo)**

(lit. underground I've taken, tram then not yet)

I've been on the underground, but not the tram

**Bākging choi ngóhdeih síhk-gwo, Chìuhjāu choi jauh meih (síhk-gwo)**

(lit. Beijing food we have eaten before, Chiu Chow food then not yet)

We've eaten Peking food but not Chiu Chow

Note some characteristic features of sentences of this kind:

- (i) the adverb **jauh** is often added after the second topic to make the contrast more explicit;
- (ii) the predicate can be omitted in the second clause;
- (iii) in many cases the most natural English translation does not put the object first; this illustrates how the Cantonese syntax 'prefers' the topicalized version.

**Topic without subject**

Making the object the topic usually results in the word order: object – subject – verb, as in the above examples. Remembering that the subject can be omitted, however (see Unit 4), we are often left with merely object – verb:

**Sāangyaht daahn-gōu síhk-jó la**

(lit. birthday cake eaten already)

We've eaten the birthday cake

**Dī hēungbān yám saai la**

(lit. the champagne drunk all)

The champagne is all gone

**Gihn sāam tong-jó meih a?**

(lit. the shirt ironed or not yet)

Has the shirt been ironed?

Such a pattern often appears like a passive sentence, and may be so translated (see Unit 21):

**Sân gēichèuhng juhng héi-gán***(lit. new airport still building)*

They're still building the new airport

(or: The new airport is still being built)

**Ga chē hái chóng dōuh jing-gán***(lit. the car at the garage there repairing)*

They're repairing the car at the garage

(or: The car is being repaired at the garage)

**Hanging topics**

A less familiar, but characteristically Chinese form of topicalization occurs when the topic is neither the subject nor the object of the verb, but something more loosely related to the content of the sentence. We may distinguish several types of 'hanging topics' of this kind:

- (i) The topic sets a location in time or space:

**Hēunggóng jeui gwai haih jōu ūk***(lit. Hong Kong most expensive is rent house)*

In Hong Kong the highest expense is rent

**Hahtin ngóh jūngyi yàuh-séui**

(In) summer, I like swimming

**Seuhnghói ngóh yáuh pàhngyáuh, Bākging jauh móuh**

I have some friends in Shanghai, but not in Beijing

- (ii) The topic sets up a whole, of which an element later in the sentence represents a part:

**Gam dō geijé jeui lēk haih kéuih***(lit. so many reporters most smart is him)*

Of all the reporters he's the brightest

**Nī go daahn-gōu kéuih sihk-jó yāt bun***(lit. this cake he's eaten one half)*

He's eaten half of this cake

**Sahp go hohksāang yáuh gáu go bóyāh yahp daaihhohek***(lit. ten students have nine can enter university)*

Nine out of ten students can enter university

- (iii) The topic states a general category of which the subject or object represents a particular type:

**Síusyut ngóh tái Jūngmán faai dĩ**  
(As for) novels, I read Chinese ones faster

**Bějáu léih hóiyh yám Chīngdóu**  
(For) beer, you can drink Tsingtao

**Gwóngdūng gū, ngóh jūngyi tēng Wòhng Fēi**  
As far as Cantonese songs are concerned, I like to listen to Faye Wong

## Exercise 22.1

Change the word order to make the object the topic of the sentence:

Example: **Ngóh meih síhk-gwo yùh-chi** I've never eaten shark's fin  
→ **Yùh-chi ngóh meih síhk-gwo**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 <b>Ngóh máaih-jó gó bún syū</b>             | I bought that book                      |
| 2 <b>Kéuih hóu jūngyi síhk syutgōu</b>        | She likes to eat ice cream              |
| 3 <b>Ngóh mēh sík heui Wòhnggok</b>           | I don't know the way to Mongkok         |
| 4 <b>Ngóhdeih tái-gwo nī tou hei</b>          | We've seen this film                    |
| 5 <b>Kéuih sík góng Chihjāuwá</b>             | She knows how to speak Chiuchow dialect |
| 6 <b>Léih tēng-gwo nī sáu gō meih a?</b>      | Have you heard this song before?        |
| 7 <b>Léih yáuh-móuh sāam baak mǎn a?</b>      | Have you got 300 dollars?               |
| 8 <b>Kéuih heui-gwo Hóiyēuhug Gūngyún</b>     | She has been to the Ocean Park          |
| 9 <b>Ngóh jeui jūngyi Siubōng ge yāmngohk</b> | I like Chopin's music best              |
| 10 <b>Ngóh hóu tūhngyi léih ge táifaat</b>    | I quite agree with your view            |

## Exercise 22.2

Add a clause using **jauh** to contrast with the first (for negation in the second clause, see Unit 14):

Example: **Fūng seun sé yùhn la, bún syū jauh meih** The letter's finished, the book is not

- 1 **A-Ann ngóh gin-gwo, A-May** \_\_\_\_\_  
Ann I've met, May I haven't
- 2 **Ni gihn sām sái-jó, gó gihn** \_\_\_\_\_  
This dress has been washed, that one ...
- 3 **Wohnggok hóu fóngbihn, Sàigung** \_\_\_\_\_  
Mongkok is convenient, Sai Kung ...
- 4 **Ni tou hei hóu chèuhng, gó tou** \_\_\_\_\_  
This film is pretty long, that one ...
- 5 **Dihnsih ngóh yahtyaht dōu tái, dihnying** \_\_\_\_\_  
Television I watch every day, films ...
- 6 **Kéuih muihmui ngóh sīk, kéuih sailóu** \_\_\_\_\_  
Her sister I know, her brother ...
- 7 **Onjāu ngóh heui-gwo, Méihgwok** \_\_\_\_\_  
Australia I've been to, America ...
- 8 **Léih ge táihyih ngóh jipsauh, kéuih ge** \_\_\_\_\_  
Your suggestion I accept, his ...
- 9 **Yauh-séui ngóh hohk-gwo, móhngkàuh** \_\_\_\_\_  
Swimming I've learnt, tennis ...
- 10 **Làuhhàhng yāmgohk ngóh jūngyi, gúdín yāmgohk** \_\_\_\_\_  
Pop music I like, classical music ...

### Exercise 22.3

Express your opinion or experience of the following topics, beginning the sentence with the phrase provided:

Example: **Hēunggóng Dóu** ... (Hong Kong Island): **Hēunggóng Dóu**  
**ngóh mih sīk lóuh** I don't know my way around Hong Kong Island

- 1 **Faai chāan** (fast food) ...
- 2 **Syúga** (in the summer holidays) ...
- 3 **Sailouhjái** (children) ...
- 4 **Gam dō yeuhng dímsām** (of all the kinds of dim sum) ...
- 5 **Sáutàih dihnwá** (mobile phones) ...
- 6 **Sām tiuh tái** (of the three ties) ...
- 7 **Yahtmán** (Japanese) ...
- 8 **Páauchē** (sports cars) ...
- 9 **Jūnggwok yāmgohk** (Chinese music) ...
- 10 **Gít-fān** (marriage, getting married) ...

# UNIT TWENTY-THREE

## Yes/no questions

To ask a question to which the answer is 'yes' or 'no', Cantonese in effect asks 'verb-not-verb?' This is rather like asking 'Is X the case or not?' without the 'or' being expressed:

**Kéuihdeih làih-mh-làih a?**

(*lit.* they coming (or) not coming)

Are they coming?

**Léih seun-mh-seun a?**

Do you believe it?

**Léih dáng-mh-dáng kéuih a?**

Will you wait for her?

The same pattern applies to adjectives:

**Ga ché gwai-mh-gwai a?**

Is the car expensive?

**Dī hàhngléih chúhng-mh-chúhng a?**

Is the luggage heavy?

**Léih gān fóng daaih-mh-daaih a?**

Is your room big?

With auxiliaries (see Unit 20), the auxiliary is repeated before the verb:

**Gāmyaht wúih-mh-wúih lohk yúh a?**

(*lit.* today will (or) will not fall rain)

Will it rain today?

**Léih sīk-mh-sīk góng Yahtmán a?**

Can you speak Japanese?

**Léih yiu-mh-yiu heui sái-sáu-gān a?**

Do you want to go to the bathroom?

Applying this pattern to the verb **haih** 'to be' we have **haih-mhaih** 'is it the case', a form which is especially useful in checking information:

**Léih haih-mhaih sing Tàahm ga?** Is your surname Tam?  
**Ngóhdeih haih-mhaih gāmyaht heui a?** Is it today we are going?

Some points to notice:

- (i) The particle **a** is usually added: this is felt to make the question more polite, less of an imposition on the listener (see Unit 25).
- (ii) If the verb, adjective or auxiliary being questioned has more than one syllable, only the first syllable is repeated:

<b>jūngyi</b>	like	<b>Léihdeih jūng-mh-jūngyi Héunggóng a?</b> Do you like Hong Kong?
<b>sānchíng</b>	apply	<b>Léih sán-mh-sānchíng nǐ fahn gūng a?</b> Will you apply for this job?
<b>hōisām</b>	happy	<b>Léih gāmyaht hōi-mh-hōisām a?</b> Are you happy today?
<b>chūngmìhng</b>	smart	<b>Kéuih chūng-mh-chūngmìhng a?</b> Is he smart?
<b>hóyih</b>	can	<b>Ngóh hó-mh-hóyih chók a?</b> Can I sit down?
<b>yīnggōi</b>	should	<b>Ngóh yīng-mh-yīnggōi douhhip a?</b> Should I apologize?

## Exceptional verbs

Two common verbs have special negative forms, which also need to be used in questions. Since the negative form of **yáuh** is **móuh** (Unit 6) the question form is not **\*yáuh-mh-yáuh** but **yáuh-móuh**:

**Léih yáuh-móuh sailouhjái a?** Do you have children?  
**Ngóhdeih yáuh-móuh sìhgān a?** Do we have time?

We also use **yáuh-móuh** to ask a question about a past event:

**Léih yáuh-móuh heui máaih yéh a?** Did you go shopping?  
**Káhmayaht yáuh-móuh lohk yúh a?** Did it rain yesterday?

Similarly, given that the negative counterpart of **yiú** meaning 'need' is **msái** (Unit 20), the corresponding question form is **sái-msái**:

- A: **Léih sái-msái tái yīsāng a?** Do you need to see a doctor?  
 B: **Yiu a** (not \*sái a) Yes
- A: **Ngóh sái-msái bōng-sáu a?** Do I need to help?  
 B: **Msái la, mǝi** No, thank you

## Replying to questions

The standard reply to questions of this kind is to repeat the whole verb or adjective used in the question, adding the negative word **mǝh** for a negative answer:

- A: **Léih jūng-mǝh-jūngyi nīdǝuh a?** (*lit.* you like (or) not like here)  
 Do you like it here?  
 B: **Jūngyi a** (*lit.* like)  
 Yes (not \***haih**, see Unit 7)
- A: **Léih heui-mǝh-heui Lèuhndēun a?** Are you going to London?  
 B: **Mǝh heui la** No

## Questions with meih

Another important question form uses **meih** 'not yet' which when added to a statement makes a question:

- Léih síhk báau meih a?** Have you eaten enough?  
**Ngóhdeih wáan yǝhn meih a?** Have we finished playing yet?

This form is used to ask whether an action has taken place or not, with completion signalled by verbal particles like **báau** and **yǝhn** above (see Unit 17) or by the aspect markers **jó** and **gwo** (Unit 18):

- Kéuih git-jó-fān meih a?** Is he married?  
**Kéuih git-gwo-fān meih a?** Has he ever been married?  
**Léih gāau-jó séui meih a?** Have you paid your taxes yet?  
**Léih gāau-gwo séui meih a?** Have you ever paid taxes?

The standard responses pick up the relevant part of the question as follows:  
 Yes – repeat the verb and aspect marker, often adding the particle **la**:

- A: **Léih sík-jó dāng meih a?** Have you turned off the lights?  
 B: **Sík-jó la** Yes

- A: **Léih heui-gwo Maahn-gūk meih a?** Have you ever been to Bangkok?  
 B: **Heui-gwo la** Yes, I have

No – repeat **meih**, typically adding the particle **a** to make the negative response less abrupt:

- A: **Kéuih sīng-jó-jik meih a?** Has she got promoted?  
 B: **Meih a** No, not yet
- A: **Léih si-gwo waaht-syut meih a?** Have you ever tried skiing?  
 B: **Meih a** No, I haven't

### Exercise 23.1

Form yes/no questions based on the following statements:

- |                                      |                                     |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 Ngóhdeih tīngyaht heui hāahng-sāan | We're going hiking tomorrow         |
| 2 Hēunggóng yìhghā hóu yíht          | It's hot in Hong Kong now           |
| 3 Kéuih gūngsi yáuh mahntàih         | His company has problems            |
| 4 A-John yìhghing fāan-jó làih       | John is back (has returned) already |
| 5 Léih yiu làuh háidouh a            | You need to stay here               |
| 6 Kéuihdeih bün-jó ük                | They've moved house                 |
| 7 Taaigwok léihdeih heui-gwo         | You've been to Thailand before      |
| 8 Gāmyaht haih gakhèih lèihge        | Today is a holiday                  |
| 9 Kéuih haih gáu yuht chēutsai ge    | She was born in September           |
| 10 Léih ükkéi hóu yúhn ge            | Your home is a long way away        |

### Exercise 23.2

Add an auxiliary to form a question using **wúih**, **yīnggōi**, **hóyih**, **yiu/mái**, **sik**:

- |                                      |                                    |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Léihdeih _____ yìhmàhn a?          | Are you going to emigrate?         |
| 2 Tīngyaht _____ faan-gūng a?        | Do we need to go to work tomorrow? |
| 3 Léih _____ jā-chē a?               | Do you know how to drive?          |
| 4 Ngóhdeih _____ chih dĩ jáu a?      | Could we leave a bit later?        |
| 5 Léih _____ bōng ngóhdeih a?        | Would you help us?                 |
| 6 Léih _____ puih léih ükkéi-yàhn a? | Will you stay with your family?    |



- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| 7  | <b>Kéuih</b> _____ <b>je chin gāau jōu a?</b>    | Does she need to borrow money to pay her rent? |
| 8  | <b>Kéuihdeih</b> _____ <b>jóu dī git-fān lē?</b> | Maybe they should get married sooner?          |
| 9  | <b>Léih</b> _____ <b>hingjūk sāangyaht a?</b>    | Will you have a birthday celebration?          |
| 10 | <b>Ngóh</b> _____ <b>gám yéung jōuh a?</b>       | Should I act this way?                         |

### Exercise 23.3

Answer the following questions, alternating positive and negative answers:

- |    |   |                                  |
|----|---|----------------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Léih ūkkéi yáuh-móuh dihnlóuh a?</b> | Do you have a computer at home?  |
| 2  | <b>Kéuih yáuh-móuh bóuhím a?</b>        | Does he have insurance?          |
| 3  | <b>Nī go haih-mhaih lóuhbáan a?</b>     | Is this the boss?                |
| 4  | <b>Haih-mhaih léih sé ge?</b>           | Did you write this?              |
| 5  | <b>Léihdeih wúih-mh-wúih git-fān a?</b> | Will you get married?            |
| 6  | <b>Léih háau-jó sīh meih a?</b>         | Have you had your exams yet?     |
| 7  | <b>Léih heui-gwo Seuhnghói meih a?</b>  | Have you been to Shanghai?       |
| 8  | <b>Kéuih fan-jó meih a?</b>             | Has she gone to sleep yet?       |
| 9  | <b>Léih gaau yùhn syū meih a?</b>       | Have you finished teaching?      |
| 10 | <b>Ga chē johng-gwo meih a?</b>         | Has the car been in an accident? |

# UNIT TWENTY-FOUR

## Wh-questions

Wh-questions involve the 'wh-words' *who*, *what*, *where*, and so on. Their Cantonese equivalents are mostly based on the interrogative forms **bin**, **géi** and **dím**:

<b>bīn ...</b>	which?	<b>géi ...</b>	how ...?
<b>dím (yéung)</b>	how?	<b>mātyéh</b>	what?
<b>bīngo</b>	who?	<b>géisih</b>	when?
<b>díngáai</b>	why?	<b>jouh mātyéh</b>	why?
<b>bīndouh</b>	where?	<b>géi dō</b>	how many?

## Syntax of questions

Instead of coming at the beginning of the question as in English, the Cantonese question words come wherever the corresponding word or phrase would come in a plain statement:

Statement	Question
<b>Ngóh tàahn kàhm</b> I play the piano	<b>Bīngo tàahn kàhm a?</b> Who plays the piano?
<b>Ngóh gin dóu Peter</b> (lit. I see Peter)	<b>Léih gin dóu bīngo a?</b> (lit. you see who)
I saw Peter	Who did you see?
<b>Ngóh síhk mihn</b> (lit. I eat noodles)	<b>Léih síhk mātyéh a?</b> (lit. you eat what)
I'm eating noodles	What are you eating?
<b>Ngóh heui Yīnggwok</b> (lit. I go England)	<b>Léih heui bīndouh a?</b> (lit. you go where)
I'm going to England	Where are you going?

**Ngóh tīngyaht jáu**  
 (lit. I tomorrow leave)  
 I'm leaving tomorrow  
**Nīdōuh yáuh yú síhk**  
 (lit. here have fish eat)  
 There are fish to eat here

**Léih géisih jáu a?**  
 (lit. you when leave)  
 When are you leaving?  
**Bīndōuh yáuh yú síhk a?**  
 (lit. where have fish eat)  
 Where are there fish to eat?

Similarly, 'how' and 'why' usually come between the subject of the sentence and the verb, like the corresponding phrase in a statement:

**Ngóhdeih daap bāsi heui**  
**gēichēuhng**  
 (lit. we take bus go airport)  
 We go to the airport by bus

**Ngóhdeih dīm yéung heui**  
**gēichēuhng a?**  
 (lit. we how go airport)  
 How do we get to the airport?

**Ngóh yānwaih kéuih gam sēungsām**  
 (lit. I because (of) him so sad)  
 I'm so sad because of him

**Léih dīngáai gam sēungsām a?**  
 (lit. you how come so sad)  
 Why are you so sad?

**Kéuih waih-jó ngóh mēh yiu fahn**  
**gūng**  
 (lit. he on account of me not take  
 the job)  
 He turned down the job for my sake

**Kéuih dīngáai mēh yiu fahn**  
**gūng a?**  
 (lit. he how come not take the  
 job)  
 Why did he turn down the job?

Alternatively, **dīngáai** 'why' can also begin the question:

**Dīngáai léih gam sēungsām a?** Why are you so sad?  
**Dīngáai kéuih mēh làih hōi mūhn gé?** Why doesn't he open the door?

**Jouh mātýéh** (lit. 'do what?') is an alternative expression for 'why' questions:

**Kéuih jouh mātýéh gam lāu a?**  
 (lit. she do what so angry)  
 Why is she so angry?

**Léih jouh mātýéh kéih háidōuh a?**  
 (lit. you do what stand here)  
 What are you standing there for?

**Jouh mātýéh** usually asks the purpose behind someone's doing something, while **dīngáai** (lit. 'how to explain?') asks the reason for it.

## Questions and politeness

Note that the sentence particle **a** is usually added at the end, as in other types of question (Unit 23). Without it, the question would sound abrupt and even impolite: for example, if you are asking why someone is doing something, which already represents something of an intrusion. A way to make such a question more polite is to add **Chéng mahn** 'May I ask' as well as **a**:

- |                                     |                                 |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Chéng mahn yihgā géi dím a?</b>  | May I ask what time it is?      |
| <b>Chéng mahn léih gwai sing a?</b> | May I ask what your surname is? |

This formula is especially appropriate for asking questions of strangers.

## Interrogative phrases

**bīn** 'which' combines with the classifier appropriate to the noun concerned (see Unit 8); the noun itself can either be included or be understood:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Léih jūngyi bīn fuk (wá) a?</b>              | Which (picture) do you like?             |
| <b>Ngóhdeih máaih bīn tūh (yú) a?</b>           | Which (fish) shall we buy?               |
| <b>Léih go léui duhk bīn gān (hohkhaauh) a?</b> | Which (school) does your daughter go to? |

**géi** 'how (many)' combines with adverbs and adjectives to form question phrases such as **géi loi** 'how long' and **géi dō** 'how many/how much':

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Léih làih-jó Hēunggóng géi loi a?</b>      | How long have you been in Hong Kong?   |
| <b>Léih tūh fu géi chēuhng a?</b>             | How long are your trousers?            |
| <b>Ngóh tūhng léih góng-gwo géi dō chi a?</b> | How many times have I told you?        |
| <b>Daap bāsi yiu géi dō chin a?</b>           | How much does it cost to take the bus? |

Note also the phrases **géi dō seui** to ask a person's age and **géi dím (jūng)** to ask the time:

- Léih go jái géi dō seui a?**  
*(lit. your son how many years)*  
 How old is your son?

**Ngóhdeih géi dím chéut múngháu a?**

(*lit. we what time go out door*)

What time do we leave?

### Exercise 24.1

Form questions by substituting a question word for the phrase in bold italic type:

Example: *Peter dá dihnwá làih* → *Bīngo dá dihnwá làih a?*

- 1a ***Ngóh pàhngyáuh hái heiyún dāng ngóhdeih***  
*My friend is waiting for us at the cinema*
- b ***Ngóh pàhngyáuh hái heiyún dāng ngóhdeih***  
*My friend is waiting for us at the cinema*
- 2a ***Kéuihdeih tīngyaht heui Dōlēuhndō***  
*They are going to Toronto tomorrow*
- b ***Kéuihdeih tīngyahr heui Dōlēuhndō***  
*They are going to Toronto tomorrow*
- 3a ***Gām máahn yáuh yú sihk***  
*There's fish for dinner tonight*
- b ***Gām máahn yáuh yú sihk***  
*There's fish for dinner tonight*
- 4a ***Ngóh daap bāsi heui hohkhaauh***  
*I go to school by bus*
- b ***Ngóh daap bāsi heui hohkhaauh***  
*I go to school by bus*
- 5a ***Kéuih waith-jó dī jálléui yihmàhn***  
*She emigrated for the children's sake*
- b ***Kéuih waith-jó dī jálléui yihmàhn***  
*She emigrated for the children's sake*
- 6a ***Léih jyuh-jó (hái) Méihgwok sahþ līhn la***  
*You have been living in America for ten years*
- b ***Léih jyuh-jó (hái) Méihgwok sahþ līhn la***  
*You have been living in America for ten years*

### Exercise 24.2

Form questions to elicit information as follows:

- 1 Ask what your friend is eating (**sihk**)
- 2 Ask a friend when he will come back (**fān làih**)

- 3 Ask what time the plane (**fěigēi**) departs (**héifēi**)
- 4 Ask where someone lives (**jyuh**)
- 5 Ask why there is nobody here (**móuh yàhn**)
- 6 Ask a child her age (**seui**)
- 7 Ask why your friend is late (**chih-dou**)
- 8 Ask what time the library (**tòuhsyū-gwán**) closes (**sāan mǜhn**)
- 9 Ask where you can buy a train ticket (**fóchē fēi**)
- 10 Ask why the door is closed (**sāan-jó**)

### Exercise 24.3

Ask for directions in a polite way by starting with **Chéng mahn** 'May I ask':

- 1 How to get to Kowloon Tong MTR station (**Gáulúhngtòhng deihtit jaahm**)
- 2 How to get to the Chek Lap Kok Airport (**Chek Lahp Gok Gēichèuhng**)
- 3 Where is the restroom (**sáisáugāan**)/toilet (**chisó**)?
- 4 How to get to the top floor (**déng láu**)?
- 5 How to get to the post office (**yàuh-gúk**)?
- 6 Where are the restaurants (**chāantēng**) in this hotel (**jaudim**)?
- 7 Which bus goes to the Star Ferry (**Tīnsīng Máhtàuh**)?
- 8 Which ferry (**syùhn**) goes to the Discovery Bay (**Yùhgíng-wāan**)?
- 9 Where is the nearest supermarket? (**jeui káhn ge chiukāp-síhchèuhng**)?
- 10 Where is the minibus station (**sínbā jaahm**)?

# UNIT TWENTY-FIVE

## Sentence particles

Sentence particles are one of the most challenging features of Cantonese for learners of the language. Without them, many Cantonese sentences sound incomplete, abrupt, or even impolite. Cantonese has a rich repertoire of particles which serve a variety of communicative functions in different speech contexts, and are probably best learnt from direct experience. Below we introduce some of the most basic and frequently used particles, bearing in mind that there are altogether some thirty particles in use.

Perhaps the most basic particle is **a**, because of its importance for politeness and in asking questions. It is the most common, and most neutral, of the sentence particles, serving to soften the force of a statement or question.

**a** is regularly used in questions, as we have seen in Units 23–24:

- |  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| <b>Léih heui-mh-heui kéuih ūkkéi a?</b>    | Are you going to his house? |
| <b>Kéuih haih-mhaih jyuh hái Sātihn a?</b> | Does she live in Shatin?    |
| <b>Ngóhdeih heui hīndouh sihk-faahn a?</b> | Where shall we go to eat?   |

**a** can also be used in affirmative sentences, for example, to soften the force of a negative response (see Unit 24):

- |                                       |               |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| A: <b>Léih haih-mhaih msyūfuhk a?</b> | Are you sick? |
| B: <b>Mhaih a</b>                     | No            |

**mē** is used in a particular kind of question, expressing surprise or the unexpected:

- |                            |                       |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Léih mē jī mē?</b>      | Don't you know?       |
| <b>Ngóhdeih mē gau mē?</b> | Don't we have enough? |

(**mē** should not be confused with the Mandarin question particle **ma**, which has no real counterpart in Cantonese.)

Another important particle is **ge**, which appears in assertions, especially together with **haih** (see Unit 7):

<b>Kéuih jough wuhsih ge</b>	She's a nurse
or: <b>Kéuih haih jough wuhsih ge</b>	
<b>Ngóh séung bōng kéuih ge</b>	I want to help her
or: <b>Ngóh haih séung bōng kéuih ge</b>	

**jē** serves to play down the extent or significance of something:

<b>Géi baak mǎn jē</b>	It's just a few hundred dollars
<b>Hóu yùhngyih jē</b>	It's really pretty easy
<b>Ngóhdeih heui wáan háh jē</b>	We're just going to have some fun

**la** adds a sense of current relevance to the statement. It is comparable to Mandarin **le**, although rather less widely used. It occurs especially with the perfective aspect **-jó** and other particles expressing completion such as **hóu** and **yùhn**:

<b>Kéuihdeih lèih-jó-fān hóu loih la</b>	They have been divorced for some time
<b>Kéuih bún jìhjúyín sé hóu la</b>	Her autobiography is written up
<b>Ngóh tái yùhn go bougou la</b>	I've finished (reading) the report

**lā** and **ā** are used primarily in imperatives and requests (see Units 26–27):

<b>Léih síusām dī lā</b>	Do be careful
<b>Mgōi bēi bī séui ngóh ā</b>	(Give me) a glass of water, please

Of the two, **lā** is rather more insistent while **ā** is more neutral.

## Particle combinations

The expressive range of particles is greatly increased by combinations. **ge**, for example, can be followed by almost any particle:

<b>Gó tou dihhsih-kehk jough yùhn</b>	That soap opera has finished now
<i>ge la</i>	
<b>Kéuih góng-siu ge jē</b>	He's only joking
<b>Léih yihwàih ngóh sòh ge mē?</b>	Do you think I'm stupid?

In this way three or more particles can readily occur together:



**Léih sĭk louh ge la mē?**

Do you (really) know the way?

**Kéuih haih síuhohk-sāang lèihge je wo!**

She's only a primary school student, you know!

Normally the particles have their usual contributions, so that rather than learning how to use, say, the combination **ge la**, the learner should concentrate on individual particles and the combinations will tend to look after themselves.

### **Contractions: ge + a = ga**

This contraction of two particles already introduced illustrates another way in which particles combine. Take a typical statement ending with **ge**:

**Nĭ go bougou haih kéuih sé ge**

(*lit.* this report is he wrote)

It was him who wrote this report

**Kéuih haih sing Làhm ge**

(*lit.* he is surnamed Lam)

His surname is Lam

Putting these sentences into question form, which requires the particle **a**, we end up with **ga**:

**Nĭ go bougou haih-mhaih kéuih sé ga?** Was it him who wrote this report?

(not \* **Nĭ go bougou haih-mhaih kéuih sé ge a?**)

**Kéuih haih-mhaih sing Làhm ga?** Is his surname Lam?

(not \* **Kéuih haih-mhaih sing Làhm ge a?**)

Similarly **lèihge**, itself a combination of **lèih** and **ge**, becomes **lèihga** in questions through fusion with **a**:

**Nĭ go ngóh pàhngyáuh lèihge** This is my friend

**Haih-mhaih léih pàhngyáuh lèihga?** Is he your friend?

### Exercise 25.1

Add an appropriate particle at the end of each sentence (choose from **jē**, **lā**, **la**, **ge**, **ga**, **lèihga**):

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 Dī mihn sihk dāk _____               | The noodles are ready to eat                  |
| 2 Dī mihn mē sihk dāk _____            | The noodles cannot be eaten<br>(are inedible) |
| 3 Ngóh jihng haih tái-háh _____        | I'm just looking                              |
| 4 Ngóh sailóu jowh wuihngaisi _____    | My younger brother is an<br>accountant        |
| 5 Làahmyán haih gám ge _____           | Men are like that                             |
| 6 Mgoi léih bông ngóh sé _____         | Please write it for me                        |
| 7 Ngóhdeih yihgēng fān-jó-sáu _____    | We've already split up                        |
| 8 Nī go haih tīnchòih yihthng _____    | This is a child prodigy, you see              |
| 9 Léih hōisām dī _____                 | (Try to) be happier!                          |
| 10 Kéuih jāang ngóh hóu síu chín _____ | He owes me very little money                  |

### Exercise 25.2

Add an appropriate particle to complete the following questions (choose from **a**, **mē**, **ga**, **lèihga**):

- |                                     |                                       |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Léih giu mātýéh méng _____?       | What is your name?                    |
| 2 Nī go mātýéh _____?               | What is this?                         |
| 3 Díim wúih gam gwai _____?         | How come it's so expensive?           |
| 4 Gāmyaht haih Sīngkèih Yaht _____? | Is it really Sunday today?            |
| 5 Léih yám-mh-yám yéh _____?        | Will you have a drink?                |
| 6 Géidim gin gaasauh _____?         | What time do we see the<br>professor? |
| 7 Léih mē sīk jā-chē ge _____?      | Don't you know how to drive?          |
| 8 Haih-mhaih léih sé _____?         | Was it you who wrote it?              |

### Exercise 25.3

Match the sentence with the translation based on the particle:

- |                                    |                                    |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Kéuih séung bông léih ge         | a He only wants to help you        |
| 2 Kéuih séung bông léih mē         | b He wants to help you             |
| 3 Kéuih séung bông léih jē         | c Does he really want to help you? |
| 4 Léih góng béi kéuih tēng lā      | d Are you going to tell her?       |
| 5 Léih wúih góng béi kéuih tēng mē | e Would you really tell her?       |

- 6 Léih wúih-mh-wúih góng bái kéuih f Why don't you tell her?  
tēng a
- 7 Kéuihdeih git-jó-fān ge la mē g Are they married?
- 8 Kéuihdeih git-jó-fān ge la h What, they're married?
- 9 Kéuihdeih git-jó-fān meih a i They're already married

# UNIT TWENTY-SIX

## Imperatives

Imperatives are a type of sentence telling someone to act, as in commands and requests. While English drops the subject pronoun in imperatives, Cantonese typically retains it:

**Léih bōng-sáu lā**  
(lit. you help hand)  
Help me

**Léih joi góng yāt chí ā**  
(lit. you again say one time)  
Repeat (that) once more

**Léihdeih gān ngóh làih lā**  
(lit. you follow me come)  
Come with me

Note that a particle such as **lā** or **ā** is needed to distinguish an imperative from a statement; of the two, **lā** is more insistent and **ā** more neutral. The pronoun **léih** can be dropped, especially in emergencies, but this is less usual than in English and tends to be less polite:

<b>Dá dihnwá bouging lā!</b>	Call the police!
<b>Faai di hoi muhn lā!</b>	Hurry up and open the door!
<b>Gau mehng a!</b>	Help!

To make a request more polite, **ngōi** 'please' can be added at the beginning or end of the sentence (see Unit 27):

<b>Mgōi léih góng daaih sēng dī ā?</b>	Could you speak louder?
<b>Léih làih jip ngóh ā, mgōi?</b>	Could you come and pick me up, please?

Note the use of **bǒng** (*lit.* 'help') meaning to do something for another's benefit, which is often used in imperatives:

**Léih bǒng ngóh sé lā**

(*lit.* you help me write)

Write it for me, will you? (not: \*Help me write it)

**Mgòi léih bǒng ngóh hoi dāng ā**

(*lit.* please you help me open light)

Would you turn on the light for me?

Although **bǒng** on its own can mean 'help', in this construction it means that the addressee is expected to perform the action himself/herself.

Adjectives too can be used in imperatives, but call for the use of **đi** (*lit.* 'a little'):

**Léih síusám dĩ lā!**

Be careful!

**Mgòi léih síngnuhk dĩ lā!**

Please try to be smart!

**Léihdeih láahngjìhng dĩ lā!**

Calm down a bit!

Compare the use of **đi** in comparatives (see Unit 12) and similarly with adverbial constructions (see Unit 10):

**Léih hah chí jyú dāk hóu-sìhk dĩ lā!**

(*lit.* you next time cook good-to-eat more)

Can you cook a bit better next time?

**Léih jáp dāk jeng dĩ lā!**

(colloquial)

Try to dress better!

**Mgòi léih góng dāk maahn dĩ lā!**

Please speak a bit more slowly!

**Léih faai dĩ jáp yéh jáu!**

Hurry up and pack to leave!

## Prohibitions: mhóu

Negative imperatives are marked by **mhóu** 'don't' (*lit.* 'no good') between the subject and the verb. Here the pronoun can be freely omitted:

**Mhóu heui lā**

Don't go

(**Léih**) **mhóu jáu jyuh**

Don't leave yet

(**Léihdeih**) **mhóu aai-gāu lā**

Don't argue

Again the pattern is applicable to adjectives too, often with **gam** 'so':

**Mhóu gam bēigwūn lā!**

Don't be so pessimistic!

<b>(Léih) mhóu gam sēungsām lâ!</b>	Don't be so sad!
<b>(Léihdeih) mhóu chòuh lâ!</b>	Don't be (so) noisy!

Similarly with adverbial constructions:

<b>(Léih) mhóu jǎ dák gam faai lâ!</b>	Don't drive so fast
<b>(Léih) mhóu tō gam loih lâ!</b>	Don't delay too long

An alternative marker for negative imperatives is **máih**, usually used without the pronoun:

<b>Máih chòuh lâ!</b>	Don't be (so) noisy!
<b>(Léih) máih jǎu jyuh!</b>	Don't go yet!
<b>Máih chēut sēng lâ!</b>	(lit. don't produce (a) sound) Shut up!

As these examples suggest, commands with **máih** tend to be more abrupt or impatient than those with **mhóu**, and used when there is a close relationship between the speaker and addressee.

### First person imperatives: let's . . .

A different kind of imperative is the first person plural ('let's . . .'). Here the pronoun **ngóhdeih** ('we') may be retained or dropped:

<b>Ngóhdeih fān heui sīn</b>	Let's go back
<b>Jǎu lâ!</b>	Let's go!
<b>Yārchàih sīh lâ</b>	Let's eat together

The adverb **bātyùh** 'rather' is often added here, before or after **ngóhdeih**:

<b>Bātyùh ngóhdeih heui wáan lâ!</b>	Why don't we go and have some fun!
<b>Ngóhdeih bātyùh jóu dĩ jǎu ā</b>	Let's leave early

Negative counterparts can be formed by adding **mhóu** before the verb, just as for second-person imperatives:

<b>Ngóhdeih mhóu gam sām-gǎp lâ</b>	Let's not be so impatient
<b>Ngóhdeih bātyùh mhóu góng kéuih lâ</b>	Let's not talk about him

## Exercise 26.1

Add a particle to the following statements to form imperatives:

- |                           |                                  |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 Léih sé-seun béi ngóh   | Write to me                      |
| 2 Léih faai di faan úkkéi | Come home quickly                |
| 3 Maahn-máan hàahng       | Walk slowly                      |
| 4 Siusām gwo máhlouh      | Cross the street carefully       |
| 5 Jikhāak béi chún        | Pay immediately                  |
| 6 Yám dô di séui          | Drink more water                 |
| 7 Jáu di fong gūng        | Get off work as early as you can |
| 8 Tàuh ngóh yāt piú       | Vote for me                      |
| 9 Dáng ngóh yāt jahn      | Wait for me a while              |
| 10 Lám chingchó di        | Think more clearly               |

## Exercise 26.2

Make negative counterparts of the imperatives given:

Example: Léih sáan mǔhn lâ Close the door, will you? → Léih mǔhóu sáan mǔhn lâ

- |                                 |                                |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Léih hoi chéung lâ            | Open the window, will you?     |
| 2 Léih góng lohk heui lâ        | Carry on speaking, will you?   |
| 3 Léih maaih-jó gūan úk lâ      | Sell the house, will you?      |
| 4 Léih sihk yeuhk lâ            | Take the medicine, will you?   |
| 5 Léih góí tàihmuhk lâ          | Change the topic, will you?    |
| 6 Léihdeih gaijuhkh góng lâ     | Do carry on talking            |
| 7 Ngóhdeih heni lâ              | Let's go                       |
| 8 Léihdeih faai di kyutdihng lâ | Hurry up and decide            |
| 9 Léih bátyùh jyun gūng lâ      | Why don't you change your job? |
| 10 Ngóhdeih bátyùh bǔn úk lâ    | Let's move house               |

## Exercise 26.3

Use **bōng** to make requests out of the following statements:

Example: só mǔhn lock the door (for me) → léih bōng ngóh só mǔhn ā

- |              |                        |
|--------------|------------------------|
| 1 máaih sung | buy groceries (for me) |
| 2 gei seun   | send the mail (for me) |

3	yíng séung	take a picture (for us)
4	gahm jōng	ring the bell (for him)
5	gāau hohkfai	pay tuition (for them)
6	jíng chē	fix the car (for us)
7	jouh daahn-gōu	make a cake (for her)
8	jyú-faahn	cook a meal (for us)
9	dehng gēipiu	book an air ticket (for me)
10	wán giing	find a job (for him)

### Exercise 26.4

Form imperatives with the adjectives provided:

Example: tell someone to be happy (hōisām): **Léih hōisām dī lá!**

- 1 ask a friend to be more optimistic (**lohk-gwūn**)
- 2 tell a guest not to be so polite (**haakhei**)
- 3 encourage a student to be diligent (**kàhnlíhk**)
- 4 tell a child not to be so greedy (**tāam-sām**)
- 5 ask someone to be more civilized (**símháhn**)
- 6 tell someone not to be so proud (**giu-ngouh**)
- 7 ask someone to speak louder (**daaih sēng**)
- 8 ask your friend not to walk (**hàahng**) so fast (**faai**)
- 9 tell a friend not to dress (**jeuk**) so casually (**chēuihbin**)
- 10 ask your spouse not to be so stubborn (**ngaahng-géng**)



# UNIT TWENTY-SEVEN

## Requests and thanks

### Polite requests

Requests typically use imperative sentences as introduced in Unit 26. To make a request in a polite way, **mgôi** 'please' is used either at the beginning or at the end of the utterance. Note that the particle **ā** or **lā** is necessary so that the request does not sound abrupt (see Units 25–26):

<b>Mgôi búi búi yih chàh ngóh ā?</b>	May I have a cup of hot tea, please?
<b>Búi yāt go seunfūng ngóh ā, mgôi?</b>	May I have an envelope, please?

Alternatively, **mgôi léih** is used with the pronoun **léih** present:

<b>Mgôi léih búi fahb boují ngóh ā?</b>	May I have a newspaper, please?
<b>Hàahng faui dī lā, mgôi léih</b>	Walk faster, will you

Invitations which are a form of request are initiated by **chéng** which means 'invite':

<b>Chéng yahp làih chók ā</b>	Come in and have a seat, please
<b>Chéng chók dāi maahn-máan góng ā</b>	Sit down and talk slowly, please

Compare also the polite formulation **Chéng mahh** 'May I ask' (Unit 24).

### Thanks

Two different expressions mean 'thank you': **mgôi** and **dōjeh**. These cause some difficulty for the English speaker since the precise distinction between the two is not easily drawn, while **mgôi** also means 'please'. **mgôi** is used as a response to small favours such as opening the window, picking up a book from the floor, serving drinks or food:

- A: **Ngóh bōng léih ló lá** Let me carry it for you (*lit.* help you to carry it)  
 B: **Mgòi** Thanks

Note here a common source of misunderstanding: while **bōng** literally means 'help', in a sequence of verbs like the above it generally means to do something *for* someone.

**mgòi saai** 'thank you very much' is stronger, with the particle **saai** 'all' added for emphatic effect:

- A: **Yám dō dĩ tōng ā?** Have more soup, please?  
 B: **Hóu ā, mgòi saai** Sure, thanks very much  
 A: **Ngóh bōng léih hoi muhn lá** Let me open the door for you  
 B: **Léih léih dāk hóu hahp sih, mgòi saai** You came at the right time. Thanks very much

**dōjeh** is used to thank people for gifts and unexpected favours. Examples include presents and invitations:

- A: **Sung béi léih ge** This is for you (giving someone a present)  
 B: **Dōjeh** Thank you  
 A: **Gāmyaht ngóh chéng sihk-laahn** Lunch is on me today  
 B: **Dōjeh saai!** Thanks very much!  
 (alternatively B can insist on paying: **Ngóh chéng lá!** Let me pay!)

It also includes what might be considered metaphorical gifts, such as compliments and congratulations:

- A: **Gūnghéi léih wo!** Congratulations!  
 B: **Dōjeh!** Oh, thank you

Alternatively, the compliment can be played down in accordance with traditional Chinese modesty:

- A: **Léih gāmyaht jeuk dāk gam leng gé!**  
 (*lit.* you today dress manner so beautiful)  
 You're looking great today!  
 B: **Mhahh aak**  
 Not really

Thanks of any kind can be replied to with **msái** (**mgòi/dōjeh**) or **msái haakhei** all of which mean 'no need' (see Unit 20):

- A: **Dôjeh léih béi ngóh ge jíchìh** Thank you for your support  
 B: **Msái haakhei** Not at all

## Apologies

**deui-mjyuh** 'sorry' is a general apology, appropriate for minor inconveniences such as accidentally running into somebody, but also for major offences.

**Deui-mjyuh, ngóh tauhsin m̃h yīnggōi faat pèihhei ge**  
 Sorry, I shouldn't have got angry just now

**deui-mjyuh** literally means 'cannot face' and can take an object representing the person wronged, which may come after **deui-mjyuh** or between **deui** 'face' and **mjyuh**:

**Ngóh gokdāk hóu deui-mjyuh ūkkéi-yàhn**  
 I feel I cannot face my family (after what I've done)  
**Ngóh jánhaih deui-mjyuh kéuih**  
 I really feel bad about what I've done to him  
 (or **Ngóh jánhaih deui kéuih mjyuh**)

**mhóuyisi** (*lit.* '[I'm] embarrassed') is appropriate for matters such as misunderstandings and minor failures to meet expectations:

**Mhóuyisi, seuíhdouh sāk-chē, sóyih ngóh chih dou**  
 I'm sorry, the tunnel was jammed, that's why I'm late

**Mhóuyisi, ngóh làuh-jó fūng seun hái ūkkéi**  
 Sorry, I left the letter at home

**mgōi je-gwo** is used to apologize for pushing through a crowd.

## Exercise 27.1

Formulate the following requests using **mgōi**:

- 1 Give me a menu (**jēung chāanpái**)
- 2 Speak slower (**maahn dī**)
- 3 Say it again (**joi ... yāt chí**)
- 4 Write faster (**faai dī**)
- 5 Don't turn on (**hōi**) the air conditioning (**láhahghei**)

- 6 Close (**sān mǎaih**) the door (**douh mǎhn**)
- 7 Ask the students to come
- 8 Call the police (**gíngchaat**)
- 9 Don't waste money (**sāi chún**)
- 10 Give me the bill (**dāan**)

### Exercise 27.2

Make the following requests more polite by inserting **chéng** 'invite' at the beginning of the sentence and adding an appropriate particle:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 <b>Làuh dāi háu seun</b>                           | Leave a message (as on an answering machine or voicemail) |
| 2 <b>Gaijuhk góng lohk heui</b>                      | Continue talking again                                    |
| 3 <b>Dáng ngóh yāt jahn</b>                          | Wait for me a little while                                |
| 4 <b>Tūngjī ngóhdeih jeui sǎn sūsik</b>              | Inform us of the latest news                              |
| 5 <b>Séuhng tòih lǐhng jéung</b>                     | Go on the stage to get the award                          |
| 6 <b>Làuh sām tēng syū</b>                           | Listen to the lecture attentively                         |
| 7 <b>Gān-jyuh ngóh hàahng</b>                        | Follow me   |
| 8 <b>Gwo làih nǐhnh chòh</b>                         | Come and have a seat over here                            |
| 9 <b>Béi jéung gēipiu ngóh tái</b>                   | Show me your (air) ticket                                 |
| 10 <b>Sé dāi léih ge deihjī tūhng dīnhwá houhmáh</b> | Write down your address and telephone number              |

### Exercise 27.3

Choose **ngōi** or **dōjeh** to thank someone for the following:

- 1 A friend opens the door for you
- 2 An acquaintance has treated you to dinner at a restaurant
- 3 A group of colleagues present you with a leaving present
- 4 A waiter hands you the menu
- 5 A colleague compliments you on your dress/suit
- 6 Someone calls you to the phone
- 7 Someone offers to give you a ride
- 8 When you're the seller having sold something to a client, customer
- 9 Someone you don't know has helped you with directions to your destination
- 10 Your boss congratulates you on your performance

### Exercise 27.4

Express apologies as appropriate for the following situations:

- 1 You arrive very late for a formal business meeting
- 2 You inadvertently step on someone's toes
- 3 You forgot to return someone's call
- 4 You failed to do something very important as promised
- 5 You are pushing your way into the lift
- 6 You sincerely regret what you have done to someone
- 7 You're only a few minutes late. Your friends are waiting for you
- 8 You made a terrible mistake, causing your company to suffer a loss of profit
- 9 You have missed a deadline, causing some inconvenience
- 10 You have missed an important appointment

# UNIT TWENTY-EIGHT

## Numbers, dates and times

### Lucky numbers

Our last unit, twenty-eight, falls appropriately enough on a lucky number: two (**yih**) sounds like 'easy' and eight (**baat**) rhymes with **faat** meaning 'make money, prosper' as in the Chinese New Year greeting **Gūnghéi faat chòih**, literally 'congratulations (and may you) prosper'. By contrast, four (**sei**) is an unlucky number as it rhymes with **séi** 'die' and is consequently subject to taboo: the Alfa Romeo 164 (**yāt luhk sei**) was perceived to be uncomfortably close to **yāt louh séi** ('one – road – die') so that it was renumbered for the Hong Kong market as the 168 (**yāt luhk baat/yāt louh faat** 'one – road – prosper').

### Cardinal numbers

The number system is decimal and highly regular – so much so that it has been claimed to give the Chinese an advantage in mathematical tasks.

1 yāt	11 sah-p-yāt	21 yih-sahp-yāt (yah/yeh-yāt)
2 yih	12 sah-p-yih	22 yih-sahp-yih (yah/yeh-yih, etc.)
3 sāam	13 sah-p-sāam	23 yih-sahp-sāam
4 sei	14 sah-p-sei	24 yih-sahp-sei
5 ngh	15 sah-p-ngh	25 yih-sahp-ngh
6 tuhk	16 sah-p-tuhk	26 yih-sahp-tuhk
7 chāt	17 sah-p-chāt	27 yih-sahp-chāt
8 baat	18 sah-p-baat	28 yih-sahp-baat
9 gáu	19 sah-p-gáu	29 yih-sahp-gáu
10 sah-p	20 yih-sahp	30 sāam-sahp
100 yāt baak	1,000,000 yāt baak maahn	
1,000 yāt chīn	10,000,000 yāt chīn maahn	
10,000 yāt maahn	100,000,000 yāt yik (as used in the Hong Kong Stock Exchange)	

Note some abbreviations:

- In combinations, **yih-sahp** (20) may become **yah-** or **yeh-**:

<b>Kéuih jauhlèih yah seui ge la</b>	She's almost twenty (years old)
<b>Yah-sei síusih yihtsin</b>	Twenty-four hour hotline
<b>Yeh-ngh mǎn, ngòi</b>	Twenty-five dollars, please

- In numbers from thirty onwards, the word **sahp** 'ten' is often reduced to **ah** as in **sà'ah-yāt** 'thirty-one', and so on.

**Ngóh yáuh gáu'ah-baat go hohksāang**  
I have ninety-eight students

**Kéuih sèhng sei'ah seui dōu mei git-fān**  
He's already forty but still not married

Numbers over a hundred precede the lower numbers as follows:

120	<b>yāt baak yih-sahp</b> (or simply: <b>baak yih</b> )
1,400	<b>yāt chīn sei baahk</b> ( <b>chīn sei</b> )
15,000	<b>yāt maahn ngh chīn</b> ( <b>maahn ngh</b> )

The difficulty comes above 10,000, **yāt maahn**. Above this figure Cantonese speakers count in terms of **maahn**, not **chīn** (1,000):

42,000	<b>sei maahn yih chīn</b>
360,000	<b>sāamsahp-luhk maahn</b>

Zero is **lihng**. It is used in numbers with zero at the beginning or between digits:

0.8	<b>lihng díng baat</b> ( <i>lit.</i> nought point eight)
306	<b>sāam baak lihng luhk</b> ( <i>lit.</i> three hundred zero six)

Two: **yih** or **léuhng**?

There are two words meaning 'two':

- yih** is used in counting and quoting numbers, days, etc.:

<b>yih yuht yih houh</b>	the second of February
<b>daih yih chí</b>	the second time ( <i>lit.</i> number two time)
<b>daih yih doih</b>	the second generation

- **léuhng** is used, together with the classifier, in referring to a number of items:

<b>léuhng go yàhn</b>	two people
<b>léuhng gihn sām</b>	two shirts

In a few instances either **yih** or **léuhng** can be used, for example, when the numbers 200, 2,000 and 20,000 are used before a noun:

<b>yih/léuhng baak mǎn</b>	two hundred dollars
<b>yih/léuhng chīn bohng</b>	two thousand pounds
<b>yih/léuhng maahn yàhn</b>	twenty thousand people

## Ordinal Numbers

Ordinal numbers are formed, also in a highly regular way, by putting **daih** before the number:

<b>daih yāt</b>	first
<b>daih yih</b>	second (idiomatically also means 'another')
<b>daih sām saigaai</b>	the third world
<b>daih lukh lūnggám</b>	the sixth sense

## Dates

Dates are also based on a highly regular system:

- days of the week are numbered one to six from **sīngkèih yāt** (Monday) to **sīngkèih lukh** (Saturday) with the exception of **sīngkèih yaht** (Sunday);
- the months are numbered from **yāt yuht** (January) through to **sahpyih yuht** (December). Note the following pairs which are similar in form but very different in meaning:

<b>sīngkèih yāt</b>	Monday	vs.	<b>sīngkèih yaht</b>	Sunday
<b>sām yuht</b>	March	vs.	<b>sām go yuht</b>	three months
<b>sahpyāt yuht</b>	November	vs.	<b>sahpyāt go yuht</b>	eleven months

The order in dates is the reverse of the English, going from the general to the specific, beginning with the year and ending with the day, expressed by the number followed by **houh**. The formula is thus: **X lūn Y yuht Z houh**:



e.g. September 3rd	<b>gáu yuht sām houh</b>
August 28	<b>baat yuht yihsahp-baat houh</b>
March 10, 1998	<b>yāt gáu gáu baat fihh sām yuht sah houh</b>
June 30, 2001	<b>yih lihng lihng yāt fihh luhk yuht sāmsahp houh</b>

## Times

The hours of day are expressed by **dím jūng** 'o'clock' or **dím** alone as follows:

X <b>dím</b> ( <b>jūng</b> )	e.g. <b>baat díng (<b>jūng</b>)</b>	eight o'clock
	<b>sahp-yih díng (<b>jūng</b>)</b>	twelve o'clock
X <b>dím bun</b>	e.g. <b>léuhng díng bun</b>	half past two, 2.30
	<b>sahp-yih díng bun</b>	half past twelve, 12.30
X <b>dím Y fān</b>	e.g. <b>yāt díng sah pān</b>	1.10
	<b>luhk díng seisahp-ngh fān</b>	6.45

To indicate points between the hours, Cantonese speakers colloquially use **jih** (5-minute intervals, or divisions of the clock face):

3.05	<b>sām díng yāt go jih</b>	(or simply: <b>sām díng yāt</b> )
3.10	<b>sām díng léuhng go jih</b>	(or: <b>sām díng yih</b> )
3.15	<b>sām díng sām go jih</b>	(or: <b>sām díng sām</b> )

For units less than ten minutes, **lihng** 'zero' is usually inserted between **dím** and **fān** in the formula **X díng lihng Y fān**:

7.04	<b>chāt díng lihng sei fān</b>
9.08	<b>gáu díng lihng baat fān</b>

Seconds are expressed by **miuh** in the form **dím Y fān Z miuh**:

1.03.09	<b>yāt díng sām fān gáu miuh</b>
8.12.16	<b>baat díng sah p-yih fān sah p-luhk miuh</b>

To specify a.m. or p.m., the word for morning, and so on, precedes the time:

<b>seuhngjau</b>	morning	<b>seuhngjau sah p díng buu</b>	10.30 a.m.
<b>bahjau</b>	afternoon	<b>bahjau sei díng jūng</b>	4.00 p.m.
<b>yehmáahn</b>	evening	<b>yehmáahn gáu díng</b>	9.00 p.m.

Notice how the general term precedes the particular, as we saw in the case of dates above. This also applies to addresses, which thus follow the opposite order to English:

**Hēunggóng Mōsingléhng Douh ng̃hsahp-luhk houh sām láu B joh**  
Flat B, Third floor, 56 Mt Davis Road, Hong Kong

**Gáulùhng Jimsājéui Gānhāfān Douh sahphaat houh deihhá**  
Ground floor, 18 Carnarvon Road, Tsimshatsui, Kowloon

### Exercise 28.1

Read the following numbers in Cantonese:

1 34	6 1,200
2 79	7 12,000
3 106	8 24,302
4 234	9 43,545
5 818	10 315,000

### Exercise 28.2

Read the following dates in Cantonese:

1 January 1	6 July 4, 1963
2 December 12	7 June 30, 1997
3 May 21	8 December 31, 1999
4 August 9	9 February 29, 2000
5 Friday 13	10 September 15, 2008

### Exercise 28.3

Match the following times:

1 2.25	a saphyāt dím sah̃p
2 1.10	b sām dím sām
3 4.30	c gáu dím bun
4 5.40	d chāt dím yihsahp-luhk fān
5 12.45	e baat dím yāt
6 8.05	f yāt dím yih
7 3.15	g ng̃h dím baat

8 11.50	h léuhng dím ng̃h
9 7.26	i sei dím bun
10 9.30	j sahpyih dím gáu

### Exercise 28.4

Practise giving the following information:

- 1 today's date (**gāmyaht ge yahtkèih**)
- 2 your birthday (**sāangyaht**)
- 3 your date of birth (**chēut sāng yahtkèih**)
- 4 your telephone number at home (**ūkkéi dihnwá**) and at work (**gūngsi dihnwá**)
- 5 your address (**deihjī**)

### Exercise 28.5

Choose an auspicious registration number for your car and explain why it is a good choice for you.

# KEY TO EXERCISES

## *Unit 1 Consonants*

**Exercise 1.2** Aspiration: the second of each pair begins with an aspirated consonant.

**Exercise 1.3** 1 Jěung 2 Jiuh 3 Gwāan 4 Dīng 5 Sám 6 Jūng  
7 Daaih Ou 8 Laih Jī Gok 9 Jěung Gwān Ou 10 Sāaugēiwāan  
11 Daaih Gok Jéui 12 Sām Séui Bóu

## *Unit 2 Vowels and diphthongs*

**Exercise 2.1** gān should sound like English 'gun', fān like 'fun', etc., while gāan, fāan, etc., should rhyme with 'barn' without the 'r' being sounded.

## *Unit 3 Tone*

**Exercise 3.4** 1 hauhmún 2 yàuh-tíu 3 bunyé 4 sūnyé 5 Dākmán  
6 tīnpáng 7 sām jek díp 8 Oumún 9 yahp-yáu 10 fāyún

## *Unit 4 Pronouns*

**Exercise 4.1** 1 Ngóh jyuh hái Gáulùhng 2 Hóu hōisām gin dóu léih  
3 Ngóhdeih sīk kéuihdeih 4 Léih haih go hóu yīsāng 5 Léihdeih  
haih hohksāang 6 Kéuih hóu jūngyi yām-ngohk 7 Ngóh dá-jó-dihnwá  
béi lóuhbáan 8 Kéuihdeih heui-gwo Oumún 9 Kéuih geidāk ngóh  
10 Kéuihdeih hóu gwa-jyuh ngóhdeih

**Exercise 4.2** 1 kéuih 2 kéuih 3 kéuihdeih 4 kéuih 5 kéuihdeih  
6 kéuihdeih 7 kéuih 8 kéuihdeih 9 ngóhdeih 10 léihdeih

**Exercise 4.3** 1 Jūngyi a/mh jūngyi a/Mhaih géi jūngyi a (Ngóh 'I' is redundant) 2 (Kàhmyaht) hóu yiht a/lohk yúh a 3 Ngóh hóiyih 4 Tóuh-ngoh a/mh tóuh-ngoh a 5 Jáu-jó la/meih (jáu) a 6 Béi ngóh 7 Maaih-jó la/meih (maaih) a 8 Leng a/mh leng ge 9 Jíng hóu la/meih (jíng hóu) a 10 Yáuh a/móuh a

*Unit 5 Possession: ge*

**Exercise 5.1** 1 léih go beih 2 kéuih ge/dí pàhngyáuh 3 kéuih deui ngáahn 4 kéuih jèung tóí 5 ngóh ge/dí seun 6 kéuih go sáudói 7 ngóh jek geuk 8 Hēunggóng ge tinhei 9 gāmyaht ge/dí sāmán 10 tīngyaht ge heiwán

**Exercise 5.2** 1 Léih deui hàaih hóu leng wo 2 Léih gihn lâu géi dō chín a? 3 Hēunggóng go gēichēuhng hóu daaih ga 4 Ngóh ga páauchē waaiah-jó 5 Ngóh dí chānchik làih taam ngóh 6 Ngóh taaitái dāng-gán ngóh 7 Ngóh go jái jūngyi cheung-gō 8 Ngóh dí jáilēui duhk-gán jūng hohk

**Exercise 5.3** 1 Ní jek sáubiū (haih) ngóh ge 2 Go gongkàhm (haih) kéuih ge 3 Gó gān ūk (haih) kéuihdeih ge 4 Ní dí syū (haih) léih (deih) ge 5 Gó dí wá (haih) Chāhn Síujé ge 6 Ní go wái (haih) ngóhdeih ge 7 Ní go baahn-gūng-sāt (haih) Làhm Sīnsāang ge 8 Dí chín (haih) ngóh taaitái ge

*Unit 6 Possession and existence: yáuh*

**Exercise 6.1** 1 Ngóh móuh yigin 2 Léih yáuh-móuh beimaht a? 3 Gāmyaht móuh siusik 4 Faatgwok yáuh-móuh Jūnggwokyáhn a? 5 Chēutbihn yáuh yáhn 6 Kéuih móuh behng 7 Léih yáuh-móuh láihmaht a? 8 Bún syū móuh Jūngmāhnjih 9 Sātihn yáuh-móuh fóchē-jaahm a? 10 Kàhmyaht yáuh taaiyēuhng

**Exercise 6.2** 1 Yáuh a/Móuh a 2 Yáuh a (ngóh yáuh géi go)/Móuh a (yāt go dōu móuh) 3 Yáuh a/Móuh a 4 Yáuh a/Móuh a/Juhng meih yáuh a 5 Yáuh gé, daahnhaih nh gau/Móuh māt a 6 Yáuh a (heni-gwo)/Móuh a (meih henigwo) 7 Yáuh a/móuh a 8 Yáuh a (hóu yáuh hingcheui)/Móuh a (móuh māt hingcheui)

**Exercise 6.3** 1 Léih yáuh-móuh chē a? 2 Léih yáuh-móuh hīngdaih jīmuih a? 3 Léih yáuh-móuh sáutàih dihnwá a? 4 Léih yáuh-móuh heui gwo Bākging a? 5 Kéuih yáuh-móuh taam-gwo léih a? 6 Nīdouh móuh jeukjái 7 Hēunggóng yáuh hóu dōsúbā 8 Yahpbihn yáuh móuh yáhn a? 9 Fōsāt (yahpbihn) yáuh móuh hohksāang a? 10 Gāmyaht yáuh móuh hóu síusik a?

*Unit 7 Being: haih*

**Exercise 7.1** 1 mhaih a 2 haih a 3 mhaih a 4 haih a 5 mhaih a 6 mhaih a 7 haih a 8 haih a 9 haih a 10 mhaih a 11 haih a 12 haih a

**Exercise 7.2** 1 haih 2 haih 3 hái 4 hái 5 haih 6 haih 7 hái 8 haih 9 hái 10 haih

**Exercise 7.3** 1 Haih lóuhbáan góng bái ngóh tēng ge 2 Haih ngóh bái bún syū léih ge 3 Kéuih haih gām jīu jáu ge 4 Gihn sāam haih géisih máaih ge 5 Go chēung haih bīngō hōi ge? 6 Ngóh haih hái nīdouh dāng léih ge 7 Haih kéuih taaitāai wán dóu ge 8 Kéuih haih hái Taaigwok johng chē ge

*Unit 8 Noun Classifiers*

**Exercise 8.1** 1 gān (catty) 2 dā (dozen) 3 fūng 4 bohng (pound) 5 dyuhn (portion, segment) 6 bŭi (glass)/jī (bottle) 7 deui (pair) 8 tou (set)

**Exercise 8.2** 1 Mgoi léuhng bŭi hūhng jáu 2 Mgoi yāt dihp cháau mihn 3 Mgoi sāam wún faahn 4 Mgoi (bái) dō deui faaijī 5 Mgoi bái jēuu séui 6 Mgoi bái yāt jēung/go cháanpái ngóh 7 Mgoi léuhng go jáu-bŭi 8 Mgoi yāt wuh yih séui 9 Mgoi yāt gihn daahn-gōu 10 Mgoi yāt bŭi gafē

**Exercise 8.3** (A) 1b 2d 3e 4c 5a (B) 1b 2d 3e 4a 5c

**Exercise 8.4** 1c 2a 3e 4b 5d

## Unit 9 Adjectives

**Exercise 9.1** 1 Kéuih hóu leng pretty/hó-oi lovely/lêk smart  
 2 Kéuihdeih hóu yáih naughty/gwāai nice, obedient/chūngmìhng clever  
 3 Kéuih hóu lêk smart/yáuh hohkmahn learned/yáuh-méng famous  
 4 Kéuih hóu làhnggon capable/kàhnlihk diligent/yáuh láihmaauh polite  
 5 Ngóh hóu kàhnlihk diligent/yáuh seunsām confident 6 Kéuih hóu  
 lengjái handsome/lengléui pretty/gōu tall 7 Ga chē hóu yáuh-yihng  
 stylish/taai gwai too expensive 8 hóu làahn-sihk pretty bad/géi hóu-sihk  
 quite good 9 Tinhei hóu sàp humid/taai yiht too hot 10 Bún síusyut  
 hóu chèuhng long/géi hóu-tái quite good (to read)

**Exercise 9.2** 1 hóu sai small/daai big/syūfuhk comfortable ge haak-  
 tēng 2 hóu pèhng cheap/gwai expensive/dái-sihk good value/ge  
 cháantēng 3 hóu yāumahk humorous/hóu muhn boring ge syū 4 hóu  
 dākyl cute/hó-oi lovely ge gáu-jái/māu-jái 5 hóu muhn boring/chèuhng  
 long/gámyāhn moving ge hei 6 hóu làahn/sām difficult/yáuh-yuhng useful  
 ge gūngfo 7 hóu yihmjuhng serious ge mahntàih 8 hóu yāumahk  
 humorous/fuhjaakyahm responsible ge lóuhsi

**Exercise 9.3** 1 Ngóhdeih géi (gau saai) múhnyi 2 Kéuih gam (taai,  
 gau saai) lêk 3 Kéuihdeih taai (gam, gau saai) guih 4 Dī sailouhjái  
 gam (géi, gau saai) dākyl 5 Tou hei gam (taai, gau saai) lohngmaahn 6  
 Dī tàuhfaat taai (gam, gau saai) dyūn 7 Dī gās gam (géi, gau saai)  
 pèhng 8 Go gaasauh gam (gau saai) yáuh-méng 9 Go hohksāng taai  
 (gam, gau saai) láahn 10 Dī séung gam (géi, gau saai) leng

**Exercise 9.4** 1 Nī dihp sung laht-láat-déi 2 Dī tōng syūn-syūn-déi  
 3 Léih dī sām sàp-sàp-déi 4 Tiuhei dung-dūng-déi 5 Kéuih faai  
 mihn yūhn-yūn-déi 6 Kéuih deui ngáahn hūhng-húng-déi 7 Kéuih  
 go baahn-gūng-sāt lyuhn-lyūn-déi 8 Láp láu sūng-sūng-déi 9 Léih fu  
 ngáahn-géng mūhng-múng-déi 10 Léih lóuhgūng jeni-jéui-déi

## Unit 10 Adverbs of manner

**Exercise 10.1** 1 Kéuihdeih màahn-máan hàahng fān ūkkéi 2 Kéuih  
 hóu hīngfāhn gám gaisiuh jihgéi 3 Kéuih hóu dauh-dáam gám mahn-  
 jó yāt go mahntàih 4 Kéuih hóu síusám gám só-jó douh mūhn 5 Ngóh  
 go jái hóu faai gám waak-jó géi fūk wá 6 Kéuih hóu lóuhlik gám hohk-  
 gán Gwóngdūng-wá 7 Dī hohksāng hóu làuhsām gám tēng-gán  
 yín-góng 8 Dī Hēunggóng hohksāng hóu hūngsīng gám yèhng-jó  
 béichoí 9 Yí-ngoíh hóu dahtyihng gám faatsūng-jó 10 Ngóh jūngyi hoi-  
 hoi-sām-sām gám hīngjūk sāangyaht

**Exercise 10.2** 1 Léih sé dāk hóu hóu 2 Ga fēigēi fēi dāk hóu dāi  
3 Ngóhdeih fan dāk hóu syūfuhk 4 Kéuihdeih wáan dāk hóu hōisām  
5 Kéuih tiu dāk hóu yúhn 6 Kéuih ying-séung ying dāk hóu leng  
7 Ngóh yauh-séui yauh dāk hóu maahn 8 Kéuih cheung-gō cheung dāk  
hóu sai-sēng 9 Ngóh jyú-faahn jyú dāk hóu faai 10 Ngóh tiu-móuh tiu  
dāk hóu chā

**Exercise 10.3** 1 hóu síusām gám (carefully) 2 hóu yáuh-loihsing gám  
(patiently) 3 hóu syūfuk gám (comfortably) 4 jìhng-jíng gám (quietly)/hóu  
láu gám (angrily) 5 hóu chingchó gám (clearly) 6 hóu faai gám  
(quickly) 7 hóu daaih sēng gám (loudly) 8 hóu làuhsām gám (atten-  
tively) 9 hóu hōisām gám (happily) 10 hóu sēungsām gám (sadly)

### *Unit 11 Adverbs of time*

**Exercise 11.1** (Note that the adverb can appear in more than one  
position.) 1 (Kàhmyaht) ngóh (kàhmyaht) hái Jimsájéui 2 Kéuih  
ngāam-ngāam dou-jó gēichēuhng/(Tàuhsin) kéuih (tàuhsin) dou-jó  
gēichēuhng 3 (Yìhchihh) Ngóh (yìhchihh) gin-gwo kéuih 4  
(Seuhngchi) kéuihdeih (seuhngchi) jung-jó tàuh-jéung 5 (Gójahnsih)  
ngóhdeih (gójahnsih) juhng sai 6 (Búnlòih) ngóh (búnlòih) jough wuhsih  
ge 7 (Hah chi) ngóhdeih (hah chi) wán léih 8 Kéuih jìkhāak hóu  
láu 9 (Daih yih sih/daih sih) ngóh (daih yih sih/daih sih) chéng léih sihk-  
faahn 10 (Yìhchihh) ngóhdeih (yìhchihh) hái Méihgwok jyuh-gwo

**Exercise 11.2** 1 Ngóh yāt go láihbaai dá yāt chí móhngkàuh (once a  
week) 2 Ngóh yaht-yaht heui yauh-séui (everyday) 3 Ngóh máahn-  
máahn tái dihsih (every night) 4 Ngóh jiu-jiu tái boují (every  
morning) 5 Ngóh yāt go láihbaai tái sām chí tàuh (three times a  
week) 6 Ngóh yāt go yuht jín yāt chí tàuhfaat (once a month) 7 Ngóh  
yāt go láihbaai máaih yāt chí sung (once every week) 8 Ngóh yāt lín  
beui géi chí yámngohk-wúi (a few times a year) 9 Ngóh yāt go yuht síhk  
yāt chí syutgōu (once a month) 10 Ngóh yāt go láihbaai taam yāt chí  
chānchik (once a week)

**Exercise 11.3** 1 (Ngóh yaht-yaht) dá bun go jūngtàuh gēi 2 lín yāt  
go jūngtàuh Gwóngdūng-wá 3 góng sāmshap fānjūng dihnwá 4 jyú  
go bun jūngtàuh faahn 5 tēng sēhng máahn yām-ngohk 6 tái sēhng  
yaht syú 7 kīng yāt jahn gáí 8 séuhng géi go jūngtàuh móhng 9 chūng  
sahp fānjūng lèuhng 10 sé yāt go jūngtàuh yahtgei

**Exercise 11.4** 1 géi go jūngtàuh (a few hours) 2 sēhng máahn  
(a whole evening) 3 yāt go hah-jau (one afternoon) 4 sēhng yaht (a



whole day) 5 *yāt go láihbaai* (one week) 6 *gái yaht* (a few days)  
7 *sèhng jiū* (a whole morning) 8 *gái máuh* (a few evenings) 9 *sèhng go yuht* (a whole month) 10 *gái lín* (a few years)

### Unit 12 Comparison

**Exercise 12.1** 1 *Dē Gāmyaht lyúhn dī* 2 *Dī: Kéuih yihgā hōisām dī*  
3 *Gwo: Ngóh go pāhngyáuh daaih gwo ngóh* 4 *Gwo: Kéuih gōu gwo yihchihh hóu dō* 5 *Dī: Gām chí maahn dī* 6 *Gwo: Nī gāan chūantēng/jáulāuh pēhng gwo gó gāan* 7 *Gwo: Ngóh jūngyi tiu-móuh dō gwo cheung-gō* 8 *Dē Léih ge lámfaat hóu dī*

**Exercise 12.2** 1 *Gāmyaht dung* (cold) *gwo kámyaht* 2 *Léuihjái gwāi* (well-behaved) *gwo làahmjái* 3 *Sēutsāam gwai* (expensive) *gwo léhngtāi* 4 *Dōlèuhndō* (juhng) *dung* (cold) *gwo Lèuhndēun* 5 *Jūngmán làuhn* (difficult) *gwo Yīngmán* 6 *Yāuh-séui syūfuhk* (comfortable) *gwo páauh-bouh* 7 *Gwóngdūng choi chēutméng* (famous) *gwo Chìuhjāu choi* 8 *Jouh sāangyi sánfú* (hard) *gwo gaau-syū*

**Exercise 12.3** 1 *Gām-lín dung gwo gauh-líu hóu dō* 2 *Gāmyaht lyúhn hóu dō* 3 *Léih dī tàuhfaat yihgā dyún siu-siu* 4 *Hēunggóng gwai gwo nīdouh géi páih* 5 *Ngóh juhng guih gwo kéuih* 6 *Sihk faahn juhng pēhng gwo sihk mihn* 7 *Gām chí hohkfai bēi seuhng chí gwai yāt baak mán* 8 *Kéuih gōu* (gwo) *ngóh sāam chyun*

**Exercise 12.4** A 1 *Hói-yú gwai gwo yéuhng-yú* 2 *Hēungpín hēung gwo hūhng chàh* 3 *Làahnfā leng gwo gūkfā* 4 *Go léui daaih* (gwo) *go jái léuhng seui* 5 *Nī bāan hohksāang kábnlihk gwo gó bāan*  
B 1 *Gauh hàaih bēi sán bàaih syūfuhk* 2 *Yihgā heui Oujāu hái yihchihh yùhngyih(-jó)* 3 *Gūngsī gām-lín bēi gauh-lín jaahn dāk dō(-jó)* 4 *Nī bún sfusyut bēi daih yāt bún bóu-tái* 5 *Léih gām chí bēi seuhng chí jouh dāk hóu(-jó)*

### Unit 13 Prepositions

**Exercise 13.1** 1 *Hohksāang hái fóng yahpbihn/douh* 2 *Jek máau hái tóit seuhngbihh* 3 *Go jámtàuh hái chòhng seuhngbihh/douh* 4 *Jī bát hái háp yahpbihn* 5 *Bún syū hái dang hahbihh* 6 *Go jūng hái chèuhng seuhngbihh* 7 *Bá jē hái mūhn haubihh* 8 *Dī séung hái séungbóu yahpbihn/douh* 9 *Pō syuh hái gāan ūk chihnbihn* 10 *Dihnsihgēi hái syūgwaih jākbin*

**Exercise 13.2** 1 ch̀euhng hauhbihn 2 sỳgwaih seuhngbihn 3 ngàhn-hòhng deuimihn 4 máhlouh j̀unggāan 5 g̀ungyún tùhng yàuh jaahm j̀igāan 6 (chóh) hái léih j̀akbín 7 háp yahpbihn/léuihmihn 8 bāanfóng ch̀eotbihn 9 geng ch̀ihnmihn 10 tóh hahmihn 11 heung ní go t̀ongheung/heung nibihn 12 yàuh j̀iu dou máahn

**Exercise 13.3** 1 Tóh seuhngmihn yáuh yáht daahp sỳ (a pile of books) 2 Ch̀euhng seuhngmihn yáuh f̀uk wá (a picture) 3 Ch̀yùhfhóng yahpbihn móuh yàhn (nobody) 4 Haak-t̀eng léuihmihn yáhn géi go haakyàhn (several guests) 5 Ỳigwaih yahpbihn yáuh hóu dô leng sām (lots of nice clothes) 6 Ch̀òhng hahmihn yáuh jek máau (a cat) 7 Dang hahbihn yáuh j̀i bát (a pen/pencil) 8 Sỳgwaih seuhngmihn yáuh go g̀ungjái (a doll) 9 Sái-sáu-gāan yahpbihn yáuh tiuh m̀ouhgān (a towel) 10 Sỳfóng yahpbihn yáuh bouh dihnlóuh (a computer)

**Exercise 13.4** 1 yàuh nídouh heui ỳiyún 2 yàuh tòuh-sỳ-gwún heui faahn-tòhng 3 yàuh deih-há heui baat láu 4 heung Gáulùhng 5 g̀ing Tòihbák heui D̀unggíng 6 yàuh H̀eunggóng g̀ing Maahn-gùk heui L̀euhndēu 7 yàuh sỳfóng heui ch̀yùhfhóng 8 yàuh daih yáht chí dou ỳihgā 9 yàuh g̀eich̀euhng heui ùkkéi 10 yàuh tàuh dou méih

#### Unit 14 Negation

**Exercise 14.1** 1 Kéuih ùkkéi móuh mahntàih 2 Ngóhdeih mhaih hóu guih 3 Ngóh móuh s̀ing-j̀ik 4 Kéuih gihn sām mhaih hóu gwai 5 Ngóh tauhsín mónh sihk yeuhk 6 Ỳisāng móuh heui douh-ga 7 Lóuhbāan mhaih hóu láu 8 Dī hohksāng móuh séuhng-móhng 9 Dī hohksāng mhaih hóu kàhnlíh 10 Gó tou hei mhaih tsai ch̀euhug

**Exercise 14.2** 1 Sihk hóisín hóu gwai (ga) 2 Wòhng Sāang chéng kéuih (a) 3 Ngóh (yáuh) dubk-gwo Faatmán (a) 4 Kéuihdeih git-jó-fān (la) 5 Ngóh bou-jó-méng (la) or Ngóh yáuh bou-méng (a) 6 Dī háausíh tàihmuhk hóu làahn (a) 7 Gāan fóng géi/hóu g̀onjehng (a) 8 Kéuih ỳihgā dákhaahn (a) 9 Gāmyaht yáuh tòhng 10 Ngóhdeih sihk-gwo s̀eh-gāng (a)

**Exercise 14.3** 1 msānsín not fresh, stale 2 msúsām careless 3 mhóuchóhí unfortunate 4 mgòuhing discontented 5 mgìnhhòhng unhealthy 6 mj̀ungyi dislike 7 m-m̀ihngbaahk fail to understand 8 mt̀uhngyi disagree 9 m-yānséung not appreciate 10 mlàuhsām inattentive

**Exercise 14.4** A 1 Kéuih mhaih móuh seunsām 2 Kéuih góng ge yéh mhaih móuh douhléih 3 Léih gājē mhaih m̄h wúih bōng léih 4 Ngóhdeih mhaih m̄h gau chín 5 Léih gāmyaht mhaih mdākhàahn B 1 Ngóhdeih mhaih mtùhngyi 2 Ngóhdeih m̄h hóyih m̄h jáu 3 Gūngsī mhaih m̄h háng gā yàhn-gūng 4 Ngóh m̄h wúih mgeidāk 5 Léih mhaih máaih m̄h héi

### Unit 15 Verbs of motion

**Exercise 15.1** 1 séuhng làih ngóh ũkkéi 2 fāan heui hohkhauh 3 séuhng heui làuhseuhng 4 gwo làih Yīnggwok 5 lohkh heui séjih-lauh 6 gwo làih tái-háh 7 fāan làih taam ngóhdeih 8 yahp heui hōi-wái 9 lohkh làih sihk-faahn 10 chēut heui jowh-yéh

**Exercise 15.2** 1 Ngóh tīngyaht heui hohkhauh (to school) 2 Léih làih nīdouh (here) sihk-faahn 3 Ngóh gwo heui góbihn (there) wán yàhn 4 Léih dākhàahn séuhng làih ngóh ũkkéi (my place) chók 5 Ngóhdeih yiu fēi fāan heui Oujāu (to Australia) 6 Go léuihjái jáu chēut heui chēutbihn (outside) 7 Ngóh dī chānchik fāan làih Hēunggóng (to Hongkong) douh-ga 8 Léih hóyih lohkh heui gwóng-chēuhng (to the shopping centre) máaih yéh 9 Ngóh jikhāk yahp heui sái-sáu-gāan (bathroom) wuhn sām 10 Ngóh tūhngsih gwo làih ngóh gāan fóng (to my room) kīng-gái

**Exercise 15.3** 1 gwo heui 2 yahp làih 3 lohkh làih 4 séuhng heui 5 chēut heui 6 fāan làih 7 lohkh làih/heui 8 séuhng heui 9 yahp heui/làih 10 fāan heui/làih

**Exercise 15.4** 1 Ga fochē fāan-jó làih 2 Dī seun gei-jó heui Méihgwok 3 Dī gúpiu sīng-jó séuhng heui gōu wái 4 Kéuih hái fóng hàahng-gán chēut làih 5 Kéuihdeih pàh-gán séuhng làih sāandéng 6 Bún syū dīt-jó lohkh (heui) deihhá 7 Go kām bñn-jó gwo heui deui-mih 8 Ga chē hōi-gán yahp làih tīhng-chē-chēuhng 9 Kéuih hàahng-gán chēut heui gāai douh 10 Kéuihdeih bñn-gán lohkh heui yīh lúu

### Unit 16 Verbs of giving

**Exercise 16.1** 1 Bēi chín ngóh taaitái (my wife) 2 Wàahn syū bēi tūhngohkh (a classmate) 3 Sung láihmaht bēi léuih-pāhngyáuh (one's girlfriend) 4 Gei seun bēi Léih haahjéung (Principal Li) 5 Dá-dihnwá bēi gíngchaat (the police) 6 Gāau gūngfo bēi sīnsāang (teacher) 7 Làuh sung bēi ngóh (me) sihk 8 Máaih sām bēi go léui (daughter)

jeuk 9 Gáan tou hei béi léih (you) tái 10 Díng gō béi ngóh pàhngyáuh  
(my friend) tēng

**Exercise 16.2** 1 Kéuih sung-jó dĩ hēungséui béi ngóh 2 Yisāng béi-jó dĩ yeuhk ngóh (sihk) 3 Ngóh wúih wàahn (fāan) dĩ mǎhn-gín béi léih/Ngóh wúih béi fāan dĩ mǎhn-gín léih 4 Lóuhháan gyūn-jó hóu dō chún béi gāuwú 5 Kéuih gei-jó fūng seun béi kéuih úkkéi-yáhn 6 Ngóh je-jó jī yùhnbāt béi kéuih 7 Mgoi béi-mín kéuih 8 Léih yiu wàahn (fāan) tiuh sósih béi ngóh/Léih yiu héi fāan tiuh sósih ngóh 9 Kéuih séung je ngóh léuhng bún syū/Kéuih séung tùhng ngóh je léuhng bún syū 10 Go góngsi béi-jó dĩ gūngfo ngóhdeih jōuh

**Exercise 16.3** 1 Ngóhdeih juhng yiu héi chún kéuih (to him) 2 Ngóh gājē je-jó ngóh hóu dō sām/je-jó hóu dō sām béi ngóh (to me) 3 Gó go yáhn sēhngyaht tǎu gūngsī (the company) yéh 4 Yáuh yáhn chéung-jó kéuih lóuhháan (his boss) hóu dō chún 5 Ngóh hení je go tùhngbohk (a classmate) géi bún syū 6 Kéuih séung mǎhn sīnsāng (the teacher) géi yeuhng yéh 7 Ngóh go pàhngyáuh gāu sailouhjái (children) Yīngmán ge 8 Jīngfú wúih faht gūngsī (the company) chún ge

### Unit 17 Verbs and Particles

**Exercise 17.1** 1 dóu 2 dāi 3 fāan 4 gwo 5 dóu 6 yòhn 7 cho 8 hōi 9 dóu 10 dóu

**Exercise 17.2** 1 Kéuih sēhngyaht tēng gújái 2 Ngóh tēng dóu yùhyihu 3 Kéuih yīhging lám dóu go daahp-on 4 Ngóh gin dóu go gwónggou 5 Léih gámgek dóu ngaatlihk 6 Ngóh mǎhn dóu yīnmeih 7 Kéuih jūngyi tái síusyut 8 Kéuih mǎh jūngyi tái hei

**Exercise 17.3** 1 Ngóh sāu mǎh dóu kéuih fūng seun 2 Ngóh máaih mǎh dóu hei fēi 3 Ngóh tái mǎh dóu/gin mǎh dóu go páai 4 Ngóh mǎhn mǎh dóu dĩ sung 5 Ngóh tēng mǎh dóu fēigēi sēng 6 Ngóh lám mǎh dóu díng daap 7 Ngóh gei mǎh dóu gam dō méng 8 Ngóh sihk mǎh dóu gam dō syutgōu 9 Ngóh wán mǎh dóu fūng seun 10 Ngóh pàhngyáuh hení mǎh dóu Sātūhn

**Exercise 17.4** 1 béi dāk dóu 2 gāau dāk dihm 3 tái dāk dóu 4 jōnh dāk sēhng 5 seun dāk gwo 6 máaih dāk héi 7 jōuh dāk chit 8 tēng dāk mǎhug

## Unit 18 Actions and events

**Exercise 18.1** 1 gin-gwo 2 sai-jó 3 sihk-jó 4 tēng-gwo 5 heui-gwo  
6 bou-jó-méng 7 yèhng-jó 8 háau-gwo 9 máaih-gwo 10 maaih-jó

**Exercise 18.2** 1 lám-gwo 2 fan-jó 3 si-gwo 4 yeuk-jó 5 sānching-jó  
6 johng-gwo 7 chéutháan-jó 8 cheung-gwo 9 tái-jó 10 fāan-jó

**Exercise 18.3** 1 Dī hohksāang meih jáu 2 Ngóh go jái meih heui-gwo  
Yínggwok 3 Kéuih meih ló chēpāaih 4 Ngóhdeih meih jough-gwo  
jīngfú gūng 5 Ngóh móuh dehng fóng 6 Go beisyū móuh fong ga  
7 Ngóh meih yám-gwo Chīngdóu bējáu 8 Ngóh móuh tūhng kéuih paak-  
gwo-tō 9 Dihnfai móuh gā ga 10 Lóuhbáan móuh lauh-gwo kéuih

**Exercise 18.4** 1f Kéuih chūhnglòih meih si-gwo chih dou  
2d Ngóhdeih yīhchih heui-gwo léih ūkkéi 3a/b Ngóh sīnsāang  
yīhging/ngāam-ngāam faan-jó séjhlàuh 4b/e Kéuih ngāam-  
ngāam/jeuigahn sāang-jó go jái 5c/d/e Ngóh chàhnggīng/yīhchih/h/  
jeuigahn háauheuih-gwo chihjik 6a/b Gāan jáulàuh yīhging/ngāam-  
ngāam sāan-jó mūhn

## Unit 19 Activities: gán and jyuh

**Exercise 19.1** 1 Ngóh yīhā wuhn-gán sāam 2 Kéuihdeih kàhm-  
máahn háidouh dá mǎhjeuk 3 Kéuih góng-gán dīhnwá 4 Yīhā  
lohk-gán yúh 5 Dī sailouhjái háidouh wáan séui 6 Ngóhdeih hàahng-  
gán làih 7 Kéuih yīhā chūng-gán-lèuhng 8 Ngóh go jái háidouh  
waahk-wá 9 Lóuhbáan hoi-gán-wái 10 Kéuih juhng lau-gán ngóhdeih

**Exercise 19.2** 1 Ngóh jā-jyuh tūh sósìh 2 Kéuih máaih-gán sung  
3 Ngóhdeih hóu gwa-jyuh léih 4 Léih jyú-gán mǎtyéh a? 5 Kénih  
yám-gán gafé 6 Dīngái léih mohng-jyuh ngóh a? 7 Dī sailoujái  
chūng-gán-lèuhng 8 Hóu dō yàhn wán-gán gūng 9 Ngóh yīhā daap-  
gán mahntàih 10 Kéuih sèhngyaht jeuk-jyuh dī gauh sāam

**Exercise 19.3** 1 Kéuih jeuk-jyuh sāam yàuh-séui He swims with his  
clothes on 2 Kéuih fīng-jyuh dī hàhngléih jáu He left carrying the bag-  
gage 3 Kéuih tái-jyuh dīhnsih jough gūngfo She does her homework while  
watching television 4 Dīngái léih mǎh mohng-jyuh ngóh góng? Why  
don't you look at me while talking? 5 Ngóh jūngyi tēng-jyuh yāmgohk  
yāusik I like to relax while listening to music 6 Kéuih sèhngyaht chí-jyuh  
léih go léuih heui gāi He always goes around with your daughter 7 Go  
māmih póuh-jyuh go jái chéut gāi The mother goes out carrying her son

8 Dímǵaai léih daai-jyuh ngáahn-géng fan-gaau a? Why do you sleep with your glasses on? 9 Ngóh lóuhgúng já-jyuh ga sân chē làih jip ngóh My husband is driving his new car to meet me 10 Ngóh m̄h wúih jó-jyuh léih faat daaht I won't get in the way of your making money

### Unit 20 Auxiliary verbs

**Exercise 20.1** 1 Ngóh yiu fāan ũkkéi 2 Kéuih sĭk jā-chē 3 Ngóh wúih douh-hip 4 Ngóh pāhngyáuh wúih daai léih heui 5 Léih hóiŷh daap fóchē heui 6 Ngóhdeih yīnggōi jéunsĭh dou 7 Léih hóiŷh jóu jáu 8 Ngóh wúih wáahn syū 9 Kéuih sĭk daap mahntàih 10 Kéuih yīnggōi git-fan 11 Kéuih háng gāam ga 12 Ngóhdeih háng tóhhip 13 Kéuihdeih m̄h háng dāng loih dī 14 Ngóh tsaitáai msái hoi-wú 15 Ngóhdeih msái dāamsām

**Exercise 20.2** 1 Ngóh m̄h sĭk kéuih 2 Ngóh m̄h sĭk heui gódouh 3 Ngóh msái fan-gaau 4 Kéuih m̄h yiu faahn 5 Kéuih m̄h wúih fāan ũkkéi 6 Léih m̄h hóiŷh làuh dāi 7 Léih m̄h hóiŷh wuhn sām 8 Ngóhdeih m̄h yīnggōi yāusĭk 9 Kéuih m̄h yīnggōi máaih láu 10 Kéuih m̄h sĭk tāahn kām

**Exercise 20.3** 1 Ngóh séung yeuk kéuih (chēut gāai) 2 Ngóh wúih tūngjĭ léih (ge la) 3 Deuimjyuh, gām chí ngóh m̄h hóiŷh bōng léih/ngóh bōng m̄h dóu léih 4 Ngóh msái sĭhk yéh 5 Léih yīnggōi sūsām dī jā-chē 6 Léih hóiŷh chíh dī gāau gūngfo 7 Léideih m̄h yīnggōi gam chōulóuh 8 Ngóh m̄h háng bái gam dō chíu 9 Ngóh m̄h sĭk heui yāuh-gúk 10 Ngóh pāhngyáuh m̄h wúih tūhngyi

**Exercise 20.4** 1 Ngóh gām-lín waahkjé wúih git-fan 2 Ngóh gām-lín hángdihng wúih git-fan 3 Kéuihdeih yātdihng hái ũkkéi 4 Kéuihdeih hótāhng hái ũkkéi 5 Ngóh yātdihng wúih sahpyih dím jīchihŷh fāan dou ũkkéi 6 Ngóh yātdihng yiu sahpyih dím jīchihŷh fāan dou ũkkéi 7 Fūng seun yātdihng yiu tīngyaht dou ge 8 Fūng seun yātdihng haih kāmŷaht dou ge 9 Go leuhtsĭ yātdihng yiu hóu lēk 10 Go leuhtsĭ yātdihng hóu lēk

**Exercise 20.5** 1 Ngóh gām-máahn pūih dāk léih 2 Ngóhdeih m̄h yahp dāk heni/Ngóhdeih yahp m̄h dóu heui 3 Léih yīhgā jáu dāk 4 Hóhksāang m̄h góng dāk daaih wah 5 Sĭhk dāk la 6 Ngóh gāmyaht heui m̄h dóu/Ngóh gāmyaht m̄h heui dāk 7 Ngóh m̄h sĭhk dāk tihmbán/Ngóh sĭhk m̄h dóu tihmbán 8 Ngóh m̄h daap dāk léih/Ngóh daap m̄h dóu léih 9 Jēung gēipiu m̄h gōi dāk/Jēung gēipiu gōi m̄h dóu 10 Nīdouh m̄h tēng dāk Daaihluhk dīhtōih/Nīdouh tēng m̄h dóu Daaihluhk dīhtōih

## Unit 21 Passives

**Exercise 21.1** 1 Ngóhdeih béi ga chē jó-jyuh 2 Kéuihdeih béi gíngchaat jūk-jó 3 Gāan fóng béi dī sailouhjái gāau lyuhn-jó 4 Gó go daaih jéung héi nī go hohksaung yèhng-jó 5 Ngóh go sáudóí béi kéuih je-jó 6 Ngóh béi dī chē sèng chòuh sèng-jó 7 Gāan ùk béi kéuih go làahm-pàhngyáuh máaih-jó 8 Go dihnlóuh béi kéuihdeih jing waaih-jó 9 Dī chín béi ngóh yuhng-jó 10 Dī jyügwúik béi kéuihdeih síhk-jó 11 Jek búi béi kénih dá laahn-jó 12 Fung seun béi ngóh tái-gwo 13 Go seunséung béi kéuih hoi-gwo 14 Ga chē béi kénih jing-gán 15 Fúk wá béi kéuihdeih maaih-jó

**Exercise 21.2** 1 Ngóh go sáubiu béi yáhn ló-jó/Ngóh béi yáhn ló-jó go sáubiu 2 Douh mún béi yáhn hoi-jó 3 Láahngheigēi béi yáhn sík-jó 4 Kéuih dī chín béi yáhn ngáak-jó/Kéuih héi yáhn ngáak-jó dī chín 5 Dī syū béi yáhn máaih-jó 6 Ngóh jek sáu béi yéh ngáauh dóu/Ngóh béi yéh ngáauh dóu jek sáu 7 Kéuih béi dī yéh faahu dóu 8 Kéuih ge sāmchihng béi dī yéh yinghéung dóu/Kéuih béi dī yéh yinghéung dóu sāmchihng

**Exercise 21.3** 1 Nī gāan fóng dehng-jó (la) 2 Gāan ùk (juhng) héi-gán 3 Tou hei yinggōi tái 4 Bún syū chéutbaan-jó (la) 5 Gihn sām msái tong (la) 6 Léih go gaiwaahk (juhng) háaukuih-gán 7 Ga chē yihm-gwo (la) 8 Fúk séung ying-jó (la) 9 Jáan dāng sík-jó (la) 10 Go sailouhjái sèhngyaht yiu póuh

## Unit 22 Word order and topicalization

**Exercise 22.1** 1 Gó bún syū ngóh máaih-jó 2 Syutgōu kéuih hóu jüngyi síhk 3 Wohnggok ngóh m̃h sík heui 4 Nī tou hei ngóhdeih tái-gwo 5 Chuihjáuwá kéuih sík góng 6 Nī sáu gō léih tēng-gwo meih a? 7 Sām baak m̃n léih yáuh-móuh a? 8 Hóiyéuhng Gūngyún kéuih heui-gwo 9 Siubōng ge yām-ngohk ngóh jeui jüngyi 10 Léih ge táifaat ngóh hóu tūhngyi

**Exercise 22.2** 1 A-May jauh meih 2 gó gihn jauh meih 3 Sāigung jauh móuh gam fongbiñ 4 gó tou hóu dyún 5 dihnying jauh hóu síu tái 6 kéuih sailóu ngóh jauh m̃h sík 7 Méihgwok jauh juhng meih 8 kéuih ge ngóh jauh m̃h jipsauh 9 móhngkàuh ngóh jauh meih hohk-gwo 10 gúdn yāmngohk ngóh jauh móuh gam jüngyi

**Exercise 22.3** 1 Faai cháan ngóh m̃h séung sèhngyaht síhk (I don't want to eat it that often) 2 Syúga ngóhdeih heui-jó léuihhāng (We went on

holiday) 3 Sailouhjái sāang léuhng go jauh gau la (To have two is enough) 4 Gam dô yeuhng dîmsām móuh yāt yeuhng hóu-síhk (Not one dish was good) 5 Sáutàih dîhnwá gachihn yuht làih yuht pèhng (The prices get cheaper and cheaper) 6 Sāam tiuh tāsai jeui leng nī tiuh (This one looks best) 7 Yahtmán ngóh géi séung hohk (I'd quite like to learn it) 8 Páauchē ngóh máaih mī héi (I can't afford one) 9 Jūnggwok yāmgohk ngóh mī suhk (I'm not familiar with it) 10 Git-fān jeui gányiu mhóu gam jóu (The most important thing is not to do it too soon)

### Unit 23 Yes/no questions

**Exercise 23.1** 1 Ngóhdeih tīngyaht heui-mh-heui háahng-sāan a? 2 Hēunggóng yihgā yiht-mh-yiht a? 3 Kéuih gūngsi yáuh-móuh mahn-tàih a? 4 A-John fāan-jó làih meih a? 5 Léih sái-msái làuh háidouh a? 6 Kéuihdeih bñ-jó ùk meih a? 7 Tsaigwok léibdeih heui-gwo meih a? 8 Gāmyaht haih-mhah gakhēi lèihga? 9 Kéuih haih-mbah gāu yuht cheutsai ga? 10 Léih ùkkéi yūhn-mh-yāhn a?

**Exercise 23.2** 1 Léibdeih wúih-mh-wúih yihmāhn a? 2 Tīngyaht sái-mh-sái fāan-gūng a? 3 Léih sīk-mh-sīk jā-chē a? 4 Ngóhdeih hó-mh-hóyih chih dī jáu a? 5 Léih wúih-mh-wúih bōng ngóhdeih a? 6 Léih wúih-mh-wúih pūih léih ùkkéi-yāhn a? 7 Kéuih sái-mh-sái je chin gāau jōu a? 8 Kéuihdeih yīng-mh-yīnggōi jóu dī git-fān lē? 9 Léih wúih-mh-wúih hingjuk sāangyaht a? 10 Ngóh yīng-mh-yīnggōi gam yéung jōuh a?

**Exercise 23.3** 1 yáuh a/móuh a 2 yáuh a/móuh a 3 haih a/mhah a 4 Haih a/mhah a 5 wúih a/mh wúih a 6 háau-jó la/meih a 7 heui-gwo la/meih a 8 fan-jó la/meih a 9 gāu yūhn la/meih a 10 jōhng-gwo la/meih a

### Unit 24 Wh-questions

**Exercise 24.1** 1a Bīngō hái heiyún dāng ngóhdeih a? 1b Ngóh pāhng-yáuh hái bīndouh dāng ngóhdeih a? 2a Kéuihdeih tīngyaht heui bīndouh a? 2b Kéuihdeih géisih heui Dòleuhndō a? 3a Gām máahn yáuh mātýéh síhk a? 3b Géisih yáuh yú síhk a? 4a Ngóh daap bāsī heui bīndouh a? 4b Ngóh dīmyéung heui hohkhaauh a? 5a Kéuih waih-jó bīngō yihmāhn a? 5b Kéuih dīmgái yihmāhn a? 6a Léih jyuh-jó (hái) bīndouh sahph līn a? 6b Léih jyuh-jó (hái) Méihgwok géi loih a?



**Exercise 24.2** 1 Léih sihk-gán mǎtyéh a? 2 Léih géisih fāan làih a? 3 Fēigēi géi dím héifēi a? 4 Léih jyuh hái bīndouh a? 5 Dím-gái móuh yàhn hái-douh a? 6 Léih géi dō-seui a? 7 Dím-gái léih chih dou a?/Léih dím-gái chih-dou a? 8 Tòuhsyū-gwún géi dím sǎn mǎhn a? 9 Bīndouh hóiyih máaih fóchē fēi a? 10 Dím-gái douh mǎhn sǎn-jó a/gé?

**Exercise 24.3** 1 Chéng mǎhn dím heui Gáulühngtòhng deih-tít jaahm a? 2 Chéng mǎhn dím heui Chek Lahp Gok Gēichèuhng a? 3 Chéng mǎhn sǎisǎugāan/chisó hái bīndouh a? 4 Chéng mǎhn dím heui déng lǎu a? 5 Chéng mǎhn dím heui yàuhjinggúk a? 6 Chéng mǎhn nǐ gāan jáudim ge chǎantēng hái bīndouh a? 7 Chéng mǎhn bīn ga bāsí heui Tīnsīng Máhtǎuh a? 8 Chéng mǎhn bīn ga syūhn heui Yūhgíng-wāan a? 9 Chéng mǎhn jeui káhn ge chūikāp-sihchèuhng hái bīndouh a? 10 Chéng mǎhn siubǎ jaahm hái bīndouh a?

#### Unit 25 Sentence Particles

**Exercise 25.1** 1 la (ge la) 2 ga (ge) 3 jě 4 ge 5 la 6 lǎ 7 la (ge la) 8 lèihgn 9 lǎ 10 jě

**Exercise 25.2** 1 a 2 lèihga 3 ga 4 mē 5 a 6 a 7 mē 8 ga (ge)

**Exercise 25.3** 1b 2c 3a 4f 5e 6d 7h 8i 9g

#### Unit 26 Imperatives

**Exercise 26.1** 1 Léih sé-seun bēi ngóh lǎ (ǎ) 2 Léih faai dĩ fāan ūkkéi lǎ (ǎ) 3 Maahn-máan hàahng (lǎ) ǎ 4 Sísǎm gwo máhlouh lǎ 5 Jíkhǎak bēi chin lǎ 6 Yám dō dĩ séui lǎ 7 Jóu dĩ fong gūng lǎ (ǎ) 8 Tǎuh ngóh yāt piu lǎ (ǎ) 9 Dǎng ngóh yāt jahn ǎ (lǎ) 10 Lám chingchó dĩ lǎ (ǎ)

**Exercise 26.2** 1 (Léih) mhóu hōi chēung lǎ or Máih hōi chēung lǎ 2 Léih mhóu góng loh heui lǎ 3 (Léih) mhóu maaih-(jó) gān ūk lǎ 4 (Léih) mhóu sihk yeuhk lǎ 5 (Léih) mhóu góit tǎihmuhk lǎ 6 Léihdeih mhóu gajjuhk góng lǎ 7 Ngóhdeih mhóu heui lǎ 8 Léihdeih mhóu gam faai kyutdihng lǎ 9 Léih bǎtyùh mhóu jyun gūng lǎ 10 Ngóhdeih bǎtyùh mhóu bǎn ūk lǎ

**Exercise 26.3** 1 Léih bōng ngóh máaih sung ǎ (lǎ) 2 Léih bōng ngóh gei seun ǎ (lǎ) 3 Mgoi léih bōng ngóhdeih yíng séung ǎ 4 Léih bōng

kéuih gahm jūng lā (ā) 5 Léih bông kéuihdeih gāu hohkfai lā (ā)  
 6 Léih bông ngóhdeih jing chē ā 7 Léih bông kéuih jōuh daahn-gōu ā  
 (lā) 8 Léih bông ngóhdeih jyú-faahn lā (ā) 9 Léih bông ngóh dehng  
 gēipiu ā (lā) 10 Léih bông kéuih wán gūng lā (ā)

**Exercise 26.4** 1 Léih loh-kwūn dī lā 2 Mhóu gam haakhei lā!  
 3 Léih kàhnlihk dī lā! 4 Léih mhóu gam tām-sām lā 5 Mgoi léih  
 simàhn dī lā! 6 Léih mhóu gam giu-ngouh 7 Mgoi léih góng (dāk)  
 daaih sēng dī lā 8 Mhóu hàahng (dāk) gam faai lā! 9 Mhóu jeuk dāk  
 gam chéuihbin lā 10 Léih mhóu gam ngaahng-géng lā!

### *Unit 27 Requests and thanks*

**Exercise 27.1** 1 Mgoi héi jēung chānpái ngóh ā/Béi jēung chānpái  
 ngóh ā, mgoi 2 Mgoi góng maahn dī ā 3 Mgoi joi góng yāt chí ā  
 4 Mgoi sé faai dī ā 5 Mgoi léih mhóu hoi láahnghei ā 6 Sāan màaih  
 dōuh mùhn ā, mgoi 7 Giu dī hohksāng lèih ā, mgoi 8 Giu gíngchaat  
 ā, mgoi 9 Mgoi léih mhóu sāai chín lā 10 Mgoi béi jēung daan ngóh  
 ā/Màaih daan ā, mgoi

**Exercise 27.2** 1 Chéng (léih) làuh dāi háu seun ā/lā 2 Chéng (léih)  
 gaijuhk góng lohk heui ā/lā 3 Chéng (léih) dáng ngóh yāt jahn ā/lā  
 4 Chéng (léih) tūngjī ngóhdeih jei sán sūsik ā/lā 5 Chéng (léih) séuhng  
 tòih líhng jéung ā/lā 6 Chéng (léih) làuh sām tēng syū lā 7 Chéng (léih)  
 gān-jyuh ngóh hàahng ā/lā 8 Chéng (léihdeih) gwo làih nībihn choh  
 ā/lā 9 Chéng (léih) béi jēung gēipiu ngóh tái ā 10 Chéng (léih) sé dāi  
 léih ge deihjí tùhng dīhwa hóuhmáh ā/lā

**Exercise 27.3** 1 mgoi 2 dōjeh 3 dōjeh 4 mgoi 5 dōjeh 6 mgoi  
 7 mgoi 8 dōjeh 9 mgoi 10 dōjeh

**Exercise 27.4** (deui-mjyuh is always acceptable) 1 deui-mjyuh  
 2 mhóuyisi 3 mhóuyisi 4 deui-mjyuh 5 mhóuyisi/mgoi je-gwo 6 deui-  
 mjyuh 7 mhóuyisi 8 deui-mjyuh 9 mhóuyisi 10 deui-mjyuh

### *Unit 28 Numbers, dates and times*

**Exercise 28.1** 1 sāamsahp-sei 2 chātsahp-gáu 3 yātbaak-líhng-  
 luhk 4 yihbaak-sāamsahp-sei 5 baat baak yātsahp-baat 6 yātchīn  
 yihbaak (chīn-yih) 7 yāt maahn-yihchīn (maahn-yih) 8 yih maahn sei  
 chín sām baak líhng-yih 9 sei maahn sām chín ngh baak seisahp-  
 ngh 10 sāamsulip-yāt maahn ngh chín

**Exercise 28.2** 1 yāt yuht yāt houh 2 sahpyih yuht sahpyih houh  
3 ngh yuht yihshap-yāt houh 4 baat yuht gáu houh 5 sahpsāam houh  
sīngkèih ngh 6 yāt gáu luhk sām fihh chāt yuht sei houh 7 yāt gáu  
gáu chāt līh luhk yuht sāamsahp houh 8 yāt gáu gáu gáu līh sahpyih  
yuht sāamsahp-yāt houh 9 yihlīhnglīhnglīhng līh yih yuht yihshap-gáu  
houh 10 yih fihng fihng baat līh gáu yuht sahpngh houh

**Exercise 28.3** 1h 2f 3i 4g 5j 6e 7b 8a 9d 10c

**Exercise 28.4** 1 Gāmyaht haih yātgaugaugáu līh sahpy yuht sahpy  
houh 2 Ngóh ge sāangyaht haih sahpy yuht sāamsahp-yāt houh 3 Ngóh  
ge chēutsāng yahtkèih haih yāt gáu luhk yih fihh gáu yuht sām houh  
4 Ngóh ūkkéi dihnwá haih yih luhk lūhng gáu chāt fihng yāt gáu/Ngóh  
gūngsī dihnwá haih yih baat ngh gáu yih chāt yih yih 5 Ngóh ge deihi  
haih Gáulūhng Sihng Lyùnhahp Douh yāt baak houh sām láu C joh

# GLOSSARY OF GRAMMATICAL TERMS

**adjective** a class of words used to describe nouns.

**adverb** a class of words used to describe verbs or to modify sentences.

**antonym** a word having the opposite meaning to another, e.g. *unclear* as opposed to *clear*.

**aspect** a grammatical distinction involving whether an event is seen as complete (as in the Cantonese perfective form **-jó**) or ongoing, as in the English progressive form *-ing* and Cantonese **-gán**.

**auxiliary** a class of words used together with a verb and carrying a grammatical function, e.g. **wúih** (will).

**classifier** a class of words used to 'classify' nouns by shared features such as shape or function, e.g. **tiuh** for elongated objects as in **tiuh yú** (fish).

**demonstrative** words indicating proximity (this) or distance (that).

**digraph** a combination of letters representing a single sound, e.g. **ng, eu**.

**diphthong** a combination of two vowel sounds, e.g. **au** as in **sau** (thin).

**experiential** a form of the verb denoting experience, or something which has happened at least once (expressed by **gwo** in Cantonese).

**hanging topic** an instance of topicalization in which the topic is not subject or object of the verb, but bears a loose relation to the subject or object.

**localizer** a class of words used after a noun to specify location, e.g. **yahp-bihn** (inside).

**measure** similar to classifier; more precisely, those classifiers which denote a measured quantity, e.g. **yāt dā gāidáan** 'a dozen eggs'.

**minimal pair** a pair of words or sentences differing in only one feature.

**modal** having to do with possibility and necessity, as opposed to fact.

**modality** the field of meaning involving possibility and necessity.

**negation** forms used to deny the truth of a statement.

**particle** a word which does not belong to any of the major word classes but plays a grammatical or communicative role. **Verb particles**, such as **dóu** indicating completion of an action, appear after the verb, while

**sentence particles**, like **a** added to questions for politeness, come at the end of the sentence.

**passive** a type of sentence which shows action being done to the subject.

**perfective** a form of the verb denoting an event viewed as complete (expressed by the suffix **-jó** in Cantonese).

**predicate** the part of the sentence which says something about the subject, typically a verb or adjective.

**preposition** a word which precedes a noun (more precisely a noun phrase), indicating a spatial or other relationship to it.

**pronoun** a word which substitutes for a noun (more precisely a noun phrase, i.e. the noun and any modifiers which go with it).

**topicalization** the process by which some constituent is placed first in the sentence, so that the sentence appears to be 'about' that constituent, e.g. **ga chē ngóh juhng meih masih** (The car I haven't sold yet).

**transitive verb** a verb that can or must take a noun as its object, e.g. **hit**.

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